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**THE POEMS OF  
OSCAR WILDE**





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POEMS  
BY  
OSCAR WILDE  
WITH THE BALLAD OF  
READING GAOL

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**NOTE**

*This collection of Wilde's Poems contains the volume of 1881 in its entirety, 'The Sphinx,' 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' and 'Ravenna.' Of the Uncollected Poems published in the Uniform Edition of 1908, a few, including the Translations from the Greek and the Polish, are omitted. Two new poems, 'Désespoir' and 'Pan,' which I have recently discovered in manuscript, are now printed for the first time. Particulars as to the original publication of each poem will be found in 'A Bibliography of the Poems of Oscar Wilde,' by Stuart Mason, London, 1907.*

**ROBERT BOM**

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## POEMS





## *HÉLAS!*

**T***O drift with every passion till my soul  
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,  
Is it for this that I have given away  
Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?  
Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll  
Scrawled over on some boyish holiday  
With idle songs for pipe and virelay,  
Which do but mar the secret of the whole.  
Surely there was a time I might have trod  
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance  
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God:  
Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod  
I did but touch the honey of romance—  
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?*



# **ELEUTHERIA**



## SONNET TO LIBERTY

**N**OT that I love thy children, whose dull eyes  
See nothing save their own unlovely woe,  
Whose minds know nothing, nothing care to  
know,—

But that the roar of thy Democracies,  
Thy reigns of Terror, thy great Anarchies,  
Mirror my wildest passions like the sea  
And give my rage a brother——! Liberty!  
For this sake only do thy dissonant cries  
Delight my discreet soul, else might all kings  
By bloody knout or treacherous cannonades  
Rob nations of their rights inviolate  
And I remain unmoved—and yet, and yet,  
These Christs that die upon the barricades,  
God knows it I am with them, in some things.

## AVE IMPERATRIX

**S**ET in this stormy Northern sea,  
Queen of these restless fields of tide,  
England ! what shall men say of thee,  
Before whose feet the worlds divide ?

The earth, a brittle globe of glass,  
Lies in the hollow of thy hand,  
And through its heart of crystal pass,  
Like shadows through a twilight land,

The spears of crimson-suited war,  
The long white-crested waves of fight,  
And all the deadly fires which are  
The torches of the lords of Night.

The yellow leopards, strained and lean,  
The treacherous Russian knows so well,  
With gaping blackened jaws are seen  
Leap through the hail of screaming shell.

The strong sea-lion of England's wars  
Hath left his sapphire cave of sea,  
To battle with the storm that mars  
The stars of England's chivalry.

The brazen-throated clarion blows  
 Across the Pathan's reedy fen,  
 And the high steep of Indian snows  
 Shake to the tread of armed men.

And many an Afghan chief, who lies  
 Beneath his cool pomegranate-trees,  
 Clutches his sword in fierce surmise  
 When on the mountain-side he sees

The fleet-foot Marri scout, who comes  
 To tell how he hath heard afar  
 The measured roll of English drums  
 Beat at the gates of Kandahar.

For southern wind and east wind meet  
 Where, girt and crowned by sword and fire,  
 England with bare and bloody feet  
 Climbs the steep road of wide empire.

O lonely Himalayan height,  
 Grey pillar of the Indian sky,  
 Where saw'st thou last in clanging flight  
 Our winged dogs of Victory?

The almond-groves of Samarcand,  
 Bokhara, where red lilies blow,  
 And Oxus, by whose yellow sand  
 The grave white-turbaned merchants go:



Go! crown with thorns thy gold-crowned head,  
Change thy glad song to song of pain;  
Wind and wild wave have got thy dead,  
And will not yield them back again.

Wave and wild wind and foreign shore  
Possess the flower of English land—  
Lips that thy lips shall kiss no more,  
Hands that shall never clasp thy hand.

What profit now that we have bound  
The whole round world with nets of gold,  
If hidden in our heart is found  
The care that groweth never old?

What profit that our galleys ride,  
Pine-forest-like, on every main?  
Ruin and wreck are at our side,  
Grim warders of the House of Pain.

Where are the brave, the strong, the fleet?  
Where is our English chivalry?  
Wild grasses are their burial-sheet,  
And sobbing waves their threnody.

O loved ones lying far away,  
What word of love can dead lips send!  
O wasted dust! O senseless clay!  
Is this the end! is this the end!

Peace, peace! we wrong the noble dead  
 To vex their solemn slumber so;  
 Though childless, and with thorn-crowned head,  
 Up the steep road must England go,

Yet when this fiery web is spun,  
 Her watchmen shall descry from far  
 The young Republic like a sun  
 Rise from these crimson seas of war.

## TO MILTON

**M**ILTON! I think thy spirit hath passed  
away  
From these white cliffs and high-embattled  
towers;

This gorgeous fiery-coloured world of ours  
Seems fallen into ashes dull and grey,  
And the age changed unto a mimic play  
Wherein we waste our else too-crowded  
hours:

For all our pomp and pageantry and powers  
We are but fit to delve the common clay,  
Seeing this little isle on which we stand,  
This England, this sea-lion of the sea,  
By ignorant demagogues is held in fee,  
Who love her not: Dear God! is this the land  
Which bare a triple empire in her hand  
When Cromwell spake the word Democracy!

## LOUIS NAPOLEON

**E**AGLE of Austerlitz ! where were thy wings  
When far away upon a barbarous strand,  
In fight unequal, by an obscure hand,  
Fell the last scion of thy brood of Kings !

Poor boy ! thou shalt not flaunt thy cloak of red,  
Or ride in state through Paris in the van  
Of thy returning legions, but instead  
Thy mother France, free and republican,

Shall on thy dead and crownless forehead place  
The better laurels of a soldier's crown,  
That not dishonoured should thy soul go  
down  
To tell the mighty Sire of thy race

That France hath kissed the mouth of Liberty,  
And found it sweeter than his honied bees,  
And that the giant wave Democracy  
Breaks on the shores where Kings lay couched  
at ease.

## SONNET

ON THE MASSACRE OF THE CHRISTIANS  
IN BULGARIA

**C**HRIST, dost thou live indeed? or are thy  
bones  
Still straitened in their rock-hewn sepulchre?  
And was thy Rising only dreamed by Her  
Whose love of thee for all her sin atones?  
For here the air is horrid with men's groans,  
The priests who call upon thy name are slain,  
Dost thou not hear the bitter wail of pain  
From those whose children lie upon the stones?  
Come down, O Son of God! incestuous gloom  
Curtains the land, and through the starless night  
Over thy Cross a Crescent moon I see!  
If thou in very truth didst burst the tomb  
Come down, O Son of Man! and show thy  
might,  
Lest Mahomet be crowned instead of Thee!

## QUANTUM MUTATA

**T**HERE was a time in Europe long ago  
When no man died for freedom anywhere,  
But England's lion leaping from its lair  
Laid hands on the oppressor ! it was so  
While England could a great Republic show.  
Witness the men of Piedmont, chiefest care  
Of Cromwell, when with impotent despair  
The Pontiff in his painted portico  
Trembled before our stern ambassadors.  
How comes it then that from such high estate  
We have thus fallen, save that Luxury  
With barren merchandise piles up the gate  
Where noble thoughts and deeds should enter  
by :  
Else might we still be Milton's heritors.

## LIBERTATIS SACRA FAMES

**A**LBEIT nurtured in democracy,  
And liking best that state republican  
Where every man is Kinglike and no man  
Is crowned above his fellows, yet I see,  
Spite of this modern fret for Liberty,  
Better the rule of One, whom all obey,  
Than to let clamorous demagogues betray  
Our freedom with the kiss of anarchy.  
Wherefore I love them not whose hands profane  
Plant the red flag upon the piled-up street  
For no right cause, beneath whose ignorant  
reign  
Arts, Culture, Reverence, Honour, all things  
fade,  
Save Treason and the dagger of her trade,  
Or Murder with his silent bloody feet.

## THEORETIKOS

**T**HIS mighty empire hath but feet of clay :  
Of all its ancient chivalry and might  
Our little island is forsaken quite :  
Some enemy hath stolen its crown of bay,  
And from its hills that voice hath passed away  
Which spake of Freedom : O come out of it,  
Come out of it, my Soul, thou art not fit  
For this vile traffic-house, where day by day  
Wisdom and reverence are sold at mart,  
And the rude people rage with ignorant cries  
Against an heritage of centuries.  
It mars my calm : wherefore in dreams of Art  
And loftiest culture I would stand apart,  
Neither for God, nor for his enemies.





## **THE GARDEN OF EROS**



## THE GARDEN OF EROS

**I**T is full summer now, the heart of June ;  
Not yet the sunburnt reapers are astir  
Upon the upland meadow where too soon  
Rich autumn time, the season's usurer,  
Will lend his hoarded gold to all the trees,  
And see his treasure scattered by the wild and  
spendthrift breeze.

Too soon indeed ! yet here the daffodil,  
That love-child of the Spring, has lingered on  
To vex the rose with jealousy, and still  
The harebell spreads her azure pavilion,  
And like a strayed and wandering reveller  
Abandoned of its brothers, whom long since  
June's messenger

The missel-thrush has frightened from the glade,  
One pale narcissus loiters fearfully  
Close to a shadowy nook, where half afraid  
Of their own loveliness some violets lie  
That will not look the gold sun in the face  
For fear of too much splendour,—ah ! methinks  
it is a place

Which should be trodden by Persephone  
When wearied of the flowerless fields of Dis!  
Or danced on by the lads of Arcady!  
The hidden secret of eternal bliss  
Known to the Grecian here a man might find,  
Ah! you and I may find it now if Love and  
Sleep be kind.

There are the flowers which mourning Herakles  
Strewed on the tomb of Hylas, columbine,  
Its white doves all a-flutter where the breeze  
Kissed them too harshly, the small celandine,  
That yellow-kirtled chorister of eve,  
And lilac lady's-smock,—but let them bloom  
alone, and leave

Yon spirèd hollyhock red-crocketed  
To sway its silent chimes, else must the bee,  
Its little bellringer, go seek instead  
Some other pleasaunce; the anemone  
That weeps at daybreak, like a silly girl  
Before her love, and hardly lets the butterflies  
unfurl

Their painted wings beside it,—bid it pine  
In pale virginity; the winter snow  
Will suit it better than those lips of thine  
Whose fires would but scorch it, rather go

And pluck that amorous flower which blooms  
alone,  
Fed by the pander wind with dust of kisses not  
its own.

The trumpet-mouths of red convolvulus  
So dear to maidens, creamy meadow-sweet  
Whiter than Juno's throat and odorous  
As all Arabia, hyacinths the feet  
Of Huntress Dian would be loth to mar  
For any dappled fawn,—pluck these, and those  
fond flowers which are

Fairer than what Queen Venus trod upon  
Beneath the pines of Ida, eucharis,  
That morning star which does not dread the sun,  
And budding marjoram which but to kiss  
Would sweeten Cytheræa's lips and make  
Adonis jealous,—these for thy head,—and for  
thy girdle take

Yon curving spray of purple clematis  
Whose gorgeous dye outflames the Tyrian  
King,  
And foxgloves with their nodding chalices,  
But that one narciss which the startled Spring  
Let from her kirtle fall when first she heard  
In her own woods the wild tempestuous song of  
summer's bird,

Ah! leave it for a subtle memory

Of those sweet tremulous days of rain and sun,  
When April laughed between her tears to see

The early primrose with shy footsteps run  
From the gnarled oak-tree roots till all the wold,  
Spite of its brown and trampled leaves, grew  
bright with shimmering gold.

Nay, pluck it too, it is not half so sweet

As thou thyself, my soul's idolatry!

And when thou art a-wearied at thy feet

Shall oxlips weave their brightest tapestry,  
For thee the woodbine shall forget its pride

And veil its tangled whorls, and thou shalt  
walk on daisies pied.

And I will cut a reed by yonder spring

And make the wood-gods jealous, and old Pan  
Wonder what young intruder dares to sing

In these still haunts, where never foot of man  
Should tread at evening, lest he chance to spy  
The marble limbs of Artemis and all her  
company.

And I will tell thee why the jacinth wears

Such dread embroidery of dolorous moan,  
And why the hapless nightingale forbears

To sing her song at noon, but weeps alone

When the fleet swallow sleeps, and rich men  
feast,  
And why the laurel trembles when she sees the  
lightening east.

And I will sing how sad Proserpina  
Unto a grave and gloomy Lord was wed,  
And lure the silver-breasted Helena  
Back from the lotus meadows of the dead,  
So shalt thou see that awful loveliness  
For which two mighty Hosts met fearfully in  
war's abyss!

'And then I'll pipe to thee that Grecian tale  
How Cynthia loves the lad Endymion,  
And hidden in a grey and misty veil  
Hies to the cliffs of Latmos once the Sun  
Leaps from his ocean bed in fruitless chase  
Of those pale flying feet which fade away in his  
embrace.

And if my flute can breathe sweet melody,  
We may behold Her face who long ago  
Dwelt among men by the Ægean sea,  
And whose sad house with pillaged portico  
And friezeless wall and columns toppled down  
Looms o'er the ruins of that fair and violet  
cinctured town.



Spirit of Beauty ! tarry still awhile,  
They are not dead, thine ancient votaries ;  
Some few there are to whom thy radiant smile  
Is better than a thousand victories,  
Though all the nobly slain of Waterloo  
Rise up in wrath against them ! tarry still, there  
are a few

Who for thy sake would give their manlihood  
And consecrate their being ; I at least  
Have done so, made thy lips my daily food,  
And in thy temples found a goodlier feast  
Than this starved age can give me, spite of all  
Its new-found creeds so sceptical and so dog-  
matical.

Here not Cephissos, not Ilissos flows,  
The woods of white Colonos are not here,  
On our bleak hills the olive never blows,  
No simple priest conducts his lowing steer  
Up the steep marble way, nor through the town  
Do laughing maidens bear to thee the crocus-  
flowered gown.

Yet tarry ! for the boy who loved thee best,  
Whose very name should be a memory  
To make thee linger, sleeps in silent rest  
Beneath the Roman walls, and melody

Still mourns her sweetest lyre; none can play  
The lute of Adonais: with his lips Song passed  
away.

Nay, when Keats died the Muses still had left  
One silver voice to sing his threnody,  
But ah! too soon of it we were bereft

When on that riven night and stormy sea  
Panthea claimed her singer as her own,  
And slew the mouth that praised her; since  
which time we walk alone,

Save for that fiery heart, that morning star  
Of re-arisen England, whose clear eye  
Saw from our tottering throne and waste of  
war

The grand Greek limbs of young Democracy  
Rise mightily like Hesperus and bring  
The great Republic! him at least thy love hath  
taught to sing,

And he hath been with thee at Thessaly,  
And seen white Atalanta fleet of foot  
In passionless and fierce virginity

Hunting the tuskèd boar, his honied lute  
Hath pierced the cavern of the hollow hill,  
And Venus laughs to know one knee will bow  
before her still.

The little laugh of water falling down  
Is not so musical, the clammy gold  
Close hoarded in the tiny waxen town  
Has less of sweetness in it, and the old  
Half-withered reeds that waved in Arcady  
Touched by his lips break forth again to fresher  
harmony.

Spirit of Beauty, tarry yet awhile !  
Although the cheating merchants of the mart  
With iron roads profane our lovely isle,  
And break on whirling wheels the limbs of Art,  
Ay ! though the crowded factories beget  
The blindworm Ignorance that slays the soul, O  
tarry yet !

For One at least there is,—He bears his name  
From Dante and the seraph Gabriel,—  
Whose double laurels burn with deathless flame  
To light thine altar ; He too loves thee well,  
Who saw old Merlin lured in Vivien's snare,  
And the white feet of angels coming down the  
golden stair,

Loves thee so well, that all the World for him  
A gorgeous-coloured vestiture must wear,  
And Sorrow take a purple diadem,  
Or else be no more Sorrow, and Despair  
Gild its own thorns, and Pain, like Adon, be  
Even in anguish beautiful ;—such is the empery

Which Painters hold, and such the heritage  
This gentle solemn Spirit doth possess,  
Being a better mirror of his age  
In all his pity, love, and weariness,  
Than those who can but copy common things,  
And leave the Soul unpainted with its mighty  
questionings.

But they are few, and all romance has flown,  
And men can prophesy about the sun,  
And lecture on his arrows—how, alone,  
Through a waste void the soulless atoms run,  
How from each tree its weeping nymph has fled,  
And that no more 'mid English reeds a Naiad  
shows her head.

Methinks these new Actæons boast too soon  
That they have spied on beauty ; what if we  
Have analysed the rainbow, robbed the moon  
Of her most ancient, chastest mystery,  
Shall I, the last Endymion, lose all hope  
Because rude eyes peer at my mistress through  
a telescope !

What profit if this scientific age  
Burst through our gates with all its retinue  
Of modern miracles ! Can it assuage  
One lover's breaking heart ? what can it do

Ah! there is something more in that bird's  
flight

Than could be tested in a crucible!—  
But the air freshens, let us go, why soon  
The woodmen will be here; how we have lived  
this night of June!

# **ROSA MYSTICA**



## REQUIESCAT

**T**READ lightly, she is near  
Under the snow,  
Speak gently, she can hear  
The daisies grow.

All her bright golden hair  
Tarnished with rust,  
She that was young and fair  
Fallen to dust.

Lily-like, white as snow,  
She hardly knew  
She was a woman, so  
Sweetly she grew.

Coffin-board, heavy stone,  
Lie on her breast,  
I vex my heart alone,  
She is at rest.

Peace, Peace, she cannot hear  
Lyre or sonnet,  
All my life's buried here,  
Heap earth upon it.

AVIGNON.



## SONNET ON APPROACHING ITALY

I REACHED the Alps: the soul within me  
burned,

Italia, my Italia, at thy name :

And when from out the mountain's heart I  
came

And saw the land for which my life had yearned,  
I laughed as one who some great prize had  
earned :

And musing on the marvel of thy fame

I watched the day, till marked with wounds  
of flame

The turquoise sky to burnished gold was turned.

The pine-trees waved as waves a woman's hair,

And in the orchards every twining spray

Was breaking into flakes of blossoming foam :

But when I knew that far away at Rome

In evil bonds a second Peter lay,

I wept to see the land so very fair.

TURIN.

## SAN MINIATO

SEE, I have climbed the mountain side  
Up to this holy house of God,  
Where once that Angel-Painter trod  
Who saw the heavens opened wide,

And throned upon the crescent moon  
The Virginal white Queen of Grace,—  
Mary! could I but see thy face  
Death could not come at all too soon.

O crowned by God with thorns and pain!  
Mother of Christ! O mystic wife!  
My heart is weary of this life  
And over-sad to sing again.

O crowned by God with love and flame!  
O crowned by Christ the Holy One!  
O listen ere the searching sun  
Show to the world my sin and shame.

## AVE MARIA GRATIA PLENA

**W**AS this His coming! I had hoped to  
see

A scene of wondrous glory, as was told  
Of some great God who in a rain of gold  
Broke open bars and fell on Danae :  
Or a dread vision as when Semele  
Sickening for love and unappeased desire  
Prayed to see God's clear body, and the fire  
Caught her brown limbs and slew her utterly :  
With such glad dreams I sought this holy place,  
And now with wondering eyes and heart I  
stand

Before this supreme mystery of Love :  
Some kneeling girl with passionless pale face,  
An angel with a lily in his hand,  
And over both the white wings of a Dove.

FLORENCE.

## ITALIA

**I**TALIA ! thou art fallen, though with sheen  
Of battle-spears thy clamorous armies stride  
From the north Alps to the Sicilian tide !  
Ay ! fallen, though the nations hail thee Queen  
Because rich gold in every town is seen,  
And on thy sapphire-lake in tossing pride  
Of wind-filled vans thy myriad galleys ride  
Beneath one flag of red and white and green.  
O Fair and Strong ! O Strong and Fair in vain !  
Look southward where Rome's desecrated  
town  
Lies mourning for her God-anointed King !  
Look heaven-ward ! shall God allow this thing ?  
Nay ! but some flame-girt Raphael shall come  
down,  
And smite the Spoiler with the sword of pain.

VENICE.

## SONNET

WRITTEN IN HOLY WEEK AT GENOA

I WANDERED through Scoglietto's far  
retreat,  
The oranges on each o'erhanging spray  
Burned as bright lamps of gold to shame the  
day ;  
Some startled bird with fluttering wings and  
fleet  
Made snow of all the blossoms ; at my feet  
Like silver moons the pale narcissi lay :  
And the curved waves that streaked the great  
green bay  
Laughed i' the sun, and life seemed very sweet.  
Outside the young boy-priest passed singing  
clear,  
' Jesus the son of Mary has been slain,  
O come and fill his sepulchre with flowers.'  
Ah, God ! Ah, God ! those dear Hellenic hours  
Had drowned all memory of Thy bitter pain,  
The Cross, the Crown, the Soldiers and the  
Spear.

## ROME UNVISITED

## I

THE corn has turned from grey to red,  
Since first my spirit wandered forth,  
From the drear cities of the north,  
And to Italia's mountains fled.

And here I set my face towards home,  
For all my pilgrimage is done,  
Although, methinks, yon blood-red sun  
Marshals the way to Holy Rome.

O Blessed Lady, who dost hold  
Upon the seven hills thy reign !  
O Mother without blot or stain,  
Crowned with bright crowns of triple gold !

O Roma, Roma, at thy feet  
I lay this barren gift of song !  
For, ah ! the way is steep and long  
That leads unto thy sacred street.

## II

**A**ND yet what joy it were for me  
To turn my feet unto the south,  
And journeying towards the Tiber mouth  
To kneel again at Fiesole !

And wandering through the tangled pines  
That break the gold of Arno's stream,  
To see the purple mist and gleam  
Of morning on the Apennines.

By many a vineyard-hidden home,  
Orchard and olive-garden grey,  
Till from the drear Campagna's way  
The seven hills bear up the dome !

## III

A PILGRIM from the northern seas—  
What joy for me to seek alone  
The wondrous Temple and the throne  
Of Him who holds the awful keys !

When, bright with purple and with gold,  
Come priest and holy Cardinal,  
And borne above the heads of all  
The gentle Shepherd of the Fold.

O joy to see before I die  
The only God-anointed King,  
And hear the silver trumpets ring  
A triumph as He passes by !

Or at the brazen-pillared shrine  
Holds high the mystic sacrifice,  
And shows his God to human eyes  
Beneath the veil of bread and wine.



## IV

**F**OR lo, what changes time can bring !  
The cycles of revolving years  
May free my heart from all its fears,  
And teach my lips a song to sing.

Before yon field of trembling gold  
Is garnered into dusty sheaves,  
Or ere the autumn's scarlet leaves  
Flutter as birds adown the wold,

I may have run the glorious race,  
And caught the torch while yet aflame,  
And called upon the holy name  
Of Him who now doth hide His face.

ARONA.

## URBS SACRA ÆTERNA

Rome! what a scroll of History thine has  
been;

In the first days thy sword republican

Ruled the whole world for many an age's  
span:

Then of the peoples wert thou royal Queen,

Till in thy streets the bearded Goth was seen;

And now upon thy walls the breezes fan

(Ah, city crowned by God, discrowned by  
man!)

The hated flag of red and white and green.

When was thy glory! when in search for power

Thine eagles flew to greet the double sun,

And the wild nations shuddered at thy rod?

Nay, but thy glory tarried for this hour,

When pilgrims kneel before the Holy One,

The prisoned shepherd of the Church of God.

MONTE MARIO.

## SONNET

ON HEARING THE DIES IRÆ SUNG IN THE  
SISTINE CHAPEL

NAY, Lord, not thus! white lilies in the  
spring,  
Sad olive-groves, or silver-breasted dove,  
Teach me more clearly of Thy life and love  
Than terrors of red flame and thundering.  
The hillside vines dear memories of Thee bring:  
A bird at evening flying to its nest  
Tells me of One who had no place of rest:  
I think it is of Thee the sparrows sing.  
Come rather on some autumn afternoon,  
When red and brown are burnished on the  
leaves,  
And the fields echo to the gleaner's song,  
Come when the splendid fulness of the moon  
Looks down upon the rows of golden sheaves,  
And reap Thy harvest: we have waited long.

## EASTER DAY

**T**HE silver trumpets rang across the Dome :  
The people knelt upon the ground with  
awe :

And borne upon the necks of men I saw,  
Like some great God, the Holy Lord of Rome.  
Priest-like, he wore a robe more white than  
foam,

And, king-like, swathed himself in royal red,  
Three crowns of gold rose high upon his head :  
In splendour and in light the Pope passed home.  
My heart stole back across wide wastes of years  
To One who wandered by a lonely sea,  
And sought in vain for any place of rest :  
' Foxes have holes, and every bird its nest.

I, only I, must wander wearily,  
And bruise my feet, and drink wine salt with  
tears.'

## E TENEBRIS

COME down, O Christ, and help me ! reach  
thy hand,

For I am drowning in a stormier sea  
Than Simon on thy lake of Galilee :  
The wine of life is spilt upon the sand,  
My heart is as some famine-murdered land  
Whence all good things have perished utterly,  
And well I know my soul in Hell must lie  
If I this night before God's throne should stand.  
' He sleeps perchance, or rideth to the chase,  
Like Baal, when his prophets howled that  
name

From morn to noon on Carmel's smitten  
height.'  
Nay, peace, I shall behold, before the night,  
The feet of brass, the robe more white than  
flame,  
The wounded hands, the weary human face.

## VITA NUOVA

I STOOD by the unvintageable sea  
Till the wet waves drenched face and hair  
with spray ;

The long red fires of the dying day  
Burned in the west ; the wind piped drearily ;  
And to the land the clamorous gulls did flee :

‘ Alas ! ’ I cried, ‘ my life is full of pain,  
And who can garner fruit or golden grain  
From these waste fields which travail cease-  
lessly ! ’

My nets gaped wide with many a break and  
flaw,

Nathless I threw them as my final cast  
Into the sea, and waited for the end.  
When lo ! a sudden glory ! and I saw  
From the black waters of my tortured past  
The argent splendour of white limbs ascend !

## MADONNA MIA

**A** LILY-GIRL, not made for this world's  
    pain,  
With brown, soft hair close braided by her  
    ears,  
And longing eyes half veiled by slumberous  
    tears  
Like bluest water seen through mists of rain :  
Pale cheeks whereon no love hath left its stain,  
    Red underlip drawn in for fear of love,  
And white throat, whiter than the silvered  
    dove,  
Through whose wan marble creeps one purple  
    vein.  
Yet, though my lips shall praise her without  
    cease,  
Even to kiss her feet I am not bold,  
Being o'ershadowed by the wings of awe.  
Like Dante, when he stood with Beatrice  
Beneath the flaming Lion's breast, and saw  
The seventh Crystal, and the Stair of Gold.

## THE NEW HELEN

WHERE hast thou been since round the  
walls of Troy

The sons of God fought in that great emprise ?

Why dost thou walk our common earth  
again ?

Hast thou forgotten that impassioned boy,

His purple galley and his Tyrian men

And treacherous Aphrodite's mocking eyes ?

For surely it was thou, who, like a star

Hung in the silver silence of the night,

Didst lure the Old World's chivalry and might  
Into the clamorous crimson waves of war !

Or didst thou rule the fire-laden moon ?

In amorous Sidon was thy temple built

Over the light and laughter of the sea

Where, behind lattice scarlet-wrought and  
gilt,

Some brown-limbed girl did weave thee  
tapestry,

All through the waste and wearied hours of  
noon ;



Till her wan cheek with flame of passion  
burned,

And she rose up the sea-washed lips to kiss  
Of some glad Cyprian sailor, safe returned  
From Calpé and the cliffs of Herakles !

No ! thou art Helen, and none other one !

It was for thee that young Sarpedôn died,  
And Memnôn's manhood was untimely  
spent ;

It was for thee gold-crested Hector tried  
With Thetis' child that evil race to run,

In the last year of thy beleaguerment ;  
Ay ! even now the glory of thy fame  
Burns in those fields of trampled asphodel,  
Where the high lords whom Ilion knew so  
well

Clash ghostly shields, and call upon thy name.

Where hast thou been ? in that enchanted land  
Whose slumbering vales forlorn Calypso knew,  
Where never mower rose at break of day  
But all unswathed the trammelling grasses  
grew,

And the sad shepherd saw the tall corn stand  
Till summer's red had changed to withered  
grey ?

Didst thou lie there by some Lethæan stream  
Deep brooding on thine ancient memory,

The crash of broken spears, the fiery gleam  
From shivered helm, the Grecian battle-  
cry?

Nay, thou wert hidden in that hollow hill  
With one who is forgotten utterly,  
That discrowned Queen men call the  
Erycine ;  
Hidden away that never mightst thou see  
The face of Her, before whose mouldering  
shrine  
To-day at Rome the silent nations kneel ;  
Who gat from Love no joyous gladdening,  
But only Love's intolerable pain,  
Only a sword to pierce her heart in twain,  
Only the bitterness of child-bearing.

The lotus-leaves which heal the wounds of  
Death  
Lie in thy hand ; O, be thou kind to me,  
While yet I know the summer of my  
days ;  
For hardly can my tremulous lips draw breath  
To fill the silver trumpet with thy praise,  
So bowed am I before thy mystery ;  
So bowed and broken on Love's terrible wheel,  
That I have lost all hope and heart to sing,  
Yet care I not what ruin time may bring  
If in thy temple thou wilt let me kneel.

Alas, alas, thou wilt not tarry here,  
But, like that bird, the servant of the sun,  
Who flies before the north wind and the  
night,  
So wilt thou fly our evil land and drear,  
Back to the tower of thine old delight,  
And the red lips of young Euphorion ;  
Nor shall I ever see thy face again,  
But in this poisonous garden-close must stay,  
Crowning my brows with the thorn-crown of  
pain,  
Till all my loveless life shall pass away.

O Helen ! Helen ! Helen ! yet a while,  
Yet for a little while, O, tarry here,  
Till the dawn cometh and the shadows flee !  
For in the gladsome sunlight of thy smile  
Of heaven or hell I have no thought or fear,  
Seeing I know no other god but thee :  
No other god save him, before whose feet  
In nets of gold the tired planets move,  
The incarnate spirit of spiritual love  
Who in thy body holds his joyous seat.

Thou wert not born as common women are !  
But, girt with silver splendour of the foam,  
Didst from the depths of sapphire seas  
arise !  
And at thy coming some immortal star,

Bearded with flame, blazed in the Eastern  
    skies,  
And waked the shepherds on thine island-  
    home.  
Thou shalt not die : no asps of Egypt creep  
    Close at thy heels to taint the delicate air ;  
    No sullen-blooming poppies stain thy hair,  
Those scarlet heralds of eternal sleep.

Lily of love, pure and inviolate !  
    Tower of ivory ! red rose of fire !  
    Thou hast come down our darkness to  
        illumine :  
For we, close-caught in the wide nets of Fate,  
    Wearied with waiting for the World's Desire,  
    Aimlessly wandered in the House of gloom,  
Aimlessly sought some slumberous anodyne  
    For wasted lives, for lingering wretchedness,  
Till we beheld thy re-arisen shrine,  
    And the white glory of thy loveliness.



# **THE BURDEN OF ITYS**



## THE BURDEN OF ITYS

THIS English Thames is holier far than  
Rome,

Those harebells like a sudden flush of sea  
Breaking across the woodland, with the foam  
Of meadow-sweet and white anemone  
To fleck their blue waves,—God is likelier there  
Than hidden in that crystal-hearted star the pale  
monks bear !

Those violet-gleaming butterflies that take  
Yon creamy lily for their pavilion  
Are monsignores, and where the rushes shake  
A lazy pike lies basking in the sun,  
His eyes half shut,—he is some mitred old  
Bishop *in partibus* ! look at those gaudy scales all  
green and gold.

The wind the restless prisoner of the trees  
Does well for Palæstrina, one would say  
The mighty master's hands were on the keys  
Of the Maria organ, which they play  
When early on some sapphire Easter morn  
In a high litter red as blood or sin the Pope is  
borne



From his dark House out to the Balcony  
Above the bronze gates and the crowded  
square,  
Whose very fountains seem for ecstasy  
To toss their silver lances in the air,  
And stretching out weak hands to East and  
West  
In vain sends peace to peaceless lands, to restless  
nations rest.

Is not yon lingering orange after-glow  
That stays to vex the moon more fair than  
all  
Rome's lordliest pageants ! strange, a year ago  
I knelt before some crimson Cardinal  
Who bare the Host across the Esquiline,  
And now—those common poppies in the wheat  
seem twice as fine.

The blue-green beanfields yonder, tremulous  
With the last shower, sweeter perfume bring  
Through this cool evening than the odorous  
Flame-jewelled censers the young deacons  
swing,  
When the grey priest unlocks the curtained  
shrine,  
And makes God's body from the common fruit  
of corn and vine.

Poor Fra Giovanni bawling at the mass

Were out of tune now, for a small brown bird  
Sings overhead, and through the long cool  
grass

I see that throbbing throat which once I  
heard

On starlit hills of flower-starred Arcady,  
Once where the white and crescent sand of  
Salamis meets sea.

Sweet is the swallow twittering on the eaves

At daybreak, when the mower whets his  
scythe,

And stock-doves murmur, and the milkmaid  
leaves

Her little lonely bed, and carols blithe  
To see the heavy-lowing cattle wait  
Stretching their huge and dripping mouths across  
the farmyard gate.

And sweet the hops upon the Kentish leas,

And sweet the wind that lifts the new-mown  
hay,

And sweet the fretful swarms of grumbling  
bees

That round and round the linden blossoms  
play;

And sweet the heifer breathing in the stall,  
And the green bursting figs that hang upon the  
red-brick wall.

And sweet to hear the cuckoo mock the spring  
While the last violet loiters by the well,  
And sweet to hear the shepherd Daphnis sing  
The song of Linus through a sunny dell  
Of warm Arcadia where the corn is gold  
And the slight lithe-limbed reapers dance about  
the wattled fold.

And sweet with young Lycoris to recline  
In some Illyrian valley far away,  
Where canopied on herbs amaracine  
We too might waste the summer-tranced day  
Matching our reeds in sportive rivalry,  
While far beneath us frets the troubled purple  
of the sea.

But sweeter far if silver-sandalled foot  
Of some long-hidden God should ever tread  
The Nuneham meadows, if with reeded flute  
Pressed to his lips some Faun might raise his  
head  
By the green water-flags, ah ! sweet indeed  
To see the heavenly herdsman call his white-  
fleeced flock to feed.

Then sing to me thou tuneful chorister,  
Though what thou sing'st be thine own  
requiem !  
Tell me thy tale thou hapless chronicler.

Of thine own tragedies ! do not contemn  
These unfamiliar haunts, this English field,  
For many a lovely coronal our northern isle can  
yield

Which Grecian meadows know not, many a  
rose

Which all day long in vales Æolian  
A lad might seek in vain for over-grows  
Our hedges like a wanton courtesan  
Unthrifty of its beauty ; lilies too  
Ilissos never mirrored star our streams, and  
cockles blue

Dot the green wheat which, though they are  
the signs

For swallows going south, would never spread  
Their azure tents between the Attic vines ;  
Even that little weed of ragged red,  
Which bids the robin pipe, in Arcady  
Would be a trespasser, and many an unsung  
elegy

Sleeps in the reeds that fringe our winding  
Thames

Which to awake were sweeter ravishment  
Than ever Syrinx wept for ; diadems  
Of brown bee-studded orchids which were  
meant

For Cytheræa's brows are hidden here  
Unknown to Cytheræa, and by yonder pasturing  
steer

There is a tiny yellow daffodil,  
The butterfly can see it from afar,  
Although one summer evening's dew could  
fill

Its little cup twice over ere the star  
Had called the lazy shepherd to his fold  
And be no prodigal; each leaf is flecked with  
spotted gold

As if Jove's gorgeous leman Danae  
Hot from his gilded arms had stooped to  
kiss

The trembling petals, or young Mercury  
Low-flying to the dusky ford of Dis  
Had with one feather of his pinions  
Just brushed them! the slight stem which bears  
the burden of its suns

Is hardly thicker than the gossamer,  
Or poor Arachne's silver tapestry,—  
Men say it bloomed upon the sepulchre  
Of One I sometime worshipped, but to me  
It seems to bring diviner memories  
Of faun-loved Heliconian glades and blue  
nymph-haunted seas,

Of an untrodden vale at Tempe where  
On the clear river's marge Narcissus lies,  
The tangle of the forest in his hair,  
The silence of the woodland in his eyes,  
Wooing that drifting imagery which is  
No sooner kissed than broken ; memories of  
Salmacis

Who is not boy nor girl and yet is both,  
Fed by two fires and unsatisfied  
Through their excess, each passion being loth  
For love's own sake to leave the other's side  
Yet killing love by staying ; memories  
Of Oreads peeping through the leaves of silent  
moonlit trees,

Of lonely Ariadne on the wharf  
At Naxos, when she saw the treacherous crew  
Far out at sea, and waved her crimson scarf  
And called false Theseus back again nor knew  
That Dionysos on an amber pard  
Was close behind her ; memories of what  
Mæonia's bard

With sightless eyes beheld, the wall of Troy,  
Queen Helen lying in the ivory room,  
And at her side an amorous red-lipped boy  
Trimming with dainty hand his helmet's  
plume,

And far away the moil, the shout, the groan,  
As Hector shielded off the spear and Ajax  
hurled the stone ;

Of wingèd Perseus with his flawless sword  
Cleaving the snaky tresses of the witch,  
And all those tales imperishably stored  
In little Grecian urns, freightage more rich  
Than any gaudy galleon of Spain  
Bare from the Indies ever ! these at least bring  
back again,

For well I know they are not dead at all,  
The ancient Gods of Grecian poesy :  
They are asleep, and when they hear thee call  
Will wake and think 't is very Thessaly,  
This Thames the Daulian waters, this cool  
glade  
The yellow-irised mead where once young Itys  
laughed and played.

If it was thou dear jasmine-cradled bird  
Who from the leafy stillness of thy throne  
Sang to the wondrous boy, until he heard  
The horn of Atalanta faintly blown  
Across the Cumnor hills, and wandering  
Through Bagley wood at evening found the  
Attic poets' spring,—

Ah ! tiny sober-suited advocate  
That pleadest for the moon against the day !  
If thou didst make the shepherd seek his mate  
On that sweet questing, when Proserpina  
Forgot it was not Sicily and leant  
Across the mossy Sandford stile in ravished  
wonderment,—

Light-winged and bright-eyed miracle of the  
wood !

If ever thou didst soothe with melody  
One of that little clan, that brotherhood  
Which loved the morning-star of Tuscany  
More than the perfect sun of Raphael  
And is immortal, sing to me ! for I too love  
thee well.

Sing on ! sing on ! let the dull world grow  
young,

Let elemental things take form again,  
And the old shapes of Beauty walk among  
The simple garths and open crofts, as when  
The son of Leto bare the willow rod,  
And the soft sheep and shaggy goats followed  
the boyish God.

Sing on ! sing on ! and Bacchus will be here  
Astride upon his gorgeous Indian throne,  
And over whimpering tigers shake the spear  
With yellow ivy crowned and gummy cone,



While at his side the wanton Bassarid  
Will throw the lion by the mane and catch the  
mountain kid!

Sing on! and I will wear the leopard skin,  
And steal the moonèd wings of Ashtaroth,  
Upon whose icy chariot we could win  
Cithæron in an hour ere the froth  
Has over-brimmed the wine-vat or the Faun  
Ceased from the treading! ay, before the flicker-  
ing lamp of dawn

Has scared the hooting owlet to its nest,  
And warned the bat to close its filmy vans,  
Some Mænad girl with vine-leaves on her breast  
Will filch their beech-nuts from the sleeping  
Pans  
So softly that the little nested thrush  
Will never wake, and then with shrilly laugh and  
leap will rush

Down the green valley where the fallen dew  
Lies thick beneath the elm and count her  
store,  
Till the brown Satyrs in a jolly crew  
Trample the loosestrife down along the shore,  
And where their hornèd master sits in state  
Bring strawberries and bloomy plums upon a  
wicker crate!

Sing on ! and soon with passion-wearied face  
Through the cool leaves Apollo's lad will  
    come,  
The Tyrian prince his bristled boar will chase  
    Adown the chestnut-copses all a-bloom,  
And ivory-limbed, grey-eyed, with look of pride,  
After yon velvet-coated deer the virgin maid  
    will ride.

Sing on ! and I the dying boy will see  
    Stain with his purple blood the waxen bell  
That overweighs the jacinth, and to me  
    The wretched Cyprian her woe will tell,  
And I will kiss her mouth and streaming eyes,  
And lead her to the myrtle-hidden grove where  
    Adon lies !

Cry out aloud on Itys ! memory  
    That foster-brother of remorse and pain  
Drops poison in mine ear,—O to be free,  
    To burn one's old ships ! and to launch again  
Into the white-plumed battle of the waves  
And fight old Proteus for the spoil of coral-  
    flowered caves !

O for Medea with her poppied spell !  
    O for the secret of the Colchian shrine !  
O for one leaf of that pale asphodel  
    Which binds the tired brows of Proserpine,

And sheds such wondrous dew's at eve that she  
Dreams of the fields of Enna, by the far Sicilian  
sea,

Where oft the golden-girdled bee she chased  
From lily to lily on the level mead,  
Ere yet her sombre Lord had bid her taste  
The deadly fruit of that pomegranate seed,  
Ere the black steeds had harried her away  
Down to the faint and flowerless land, the sick  
and sunless day.

O for one midnight and as paramour  
The Venus of the little Melian farm !  
O that some antique statue for one hour  
Might wake to passion, and that I could  
charm  
The Dawn at Florence from its dumb despair,  
Mix with those mighty limbs and make that  
giant breast my lair !

Sing on ! sing on ! I would be drunk with life,  
Drunk with the trampled vintage of my  
youth,  
I would forget the wearying wasted strife,  
The riven veil, the Gorgon eyes of Truth,  
The prayerless vigil and the cry for prayer,  
The barren gifts, the lifted arms, the dull in-  
sensate air !

Sing on ! sing on ! O feathered Niobe,  
Thou canst make sorrow beautiful, and steal  
From joy its sweetest music, not as we  
Who by dead voiceless silence strive to heal  
Our too untented wounds, and do but keep  
Pain barricadoed in our hearts, and murder  
pillowed sleep.

Sing louder yet, why must I still behold  
The wan white face of that deserted Christ,  
Whose bleeding hands my hands did once  
enfold,  
Whose smitten lips my lips so oft have  
kissed,  
And now in mute and marble misery  
Sits in his lone dishonoured House and weeps,  
perchance for me ?

O Memory cast down thy wreathed shell !  
Break thy hoarse lute O sad Melpomene !  
O Sorrow, Sorrow keep thy cloistered cell  
Nor dim with tears this limpid Castaly !  
Cease, Philomel, thou dost the forest wrong  
To vex its sylvan quiet with such wild impassioned  
song !

Cease, cease, or if 't is anguish to be dumb  
Take from the pastoral thrush her simpler air,  
Whose jocund carelessness doth more become  
This English woodland than thy keen despair,

Ah ! cease and let the north wind bear thy lay  
Back to the rocky hills of Thrace, the stormy  
Daulian bay.

A moment more, the startled leaves had stirred,  
Endymion would have passed across the mead  
Moonstruck with love, and this still Thames  
had heard

Pan plash and paddle groping for some reed  
To lure from her blue cave that Naiad maid  
Who for such piping listens half in joy and half  
afraid.

A moment more, the waking dove had cooed,  
The silver daughter of the silver sea  
With the fond gyves of clinging hands had  
wooded

Her wanton from the chase, and Dryope  
Had thrust aside the branches of her oak  
To see the lusty gold-haired lad rein in his  
snorting yoke.

A moment more, the trees had stooped to kiss  
Pale Daphne just awakening from the swoon  
Of tremulous laurels, lonely Salmacis

Had bared his barren beauty to the moon,  
And through the vale with sad voluptuous smile  
Antinous had wandered, the red lotus of the  
Nile

Down leaning from his black and clustering  
hair,  
To shade those slumberous eyelids' caverned  
bliss,  
Or else on yonder grassy slope with bare  
High-tuniced limbs unravished Artemis  
Had bade her hounds give tongue, and roused  
the deer  
From his green ambuscade with shrill halloo  
and pricking spear.

Lie still, lie still, O passionate heart, lie still !  
O Melancholy, fold thy raven wing !  
O sobbing Dryad, from thy hollow hill  
Come not with such despondent answering !  
No more thou wingèd Marsyas complain,  
Apollo loveth not to hear such troubled songs  
of pain !

It was a dream, the glade is tenantless,  
No soft Ionian laughter moves the air,  
The Thames creeps on in sluggish leadenness,  
And from the copse left desolate and bare  
Fled is young Bacchus with his revelry,  
Yet still from Nuneham wood there comes that  
thrilling melody

So sad, that one might think a human heart  
Brake in each separate note, a quality  
Which music sometimes has, being the Art

Which is most nigh to tears and memory ;  
Poor mourning Philomel, what dost thou fear ?  
Thy sister doth not haunt these fields, Pandion  
is not here,

Here is no cruel Lord with murderous blade,  
No woven web of bloody herakdries,  
But mossy dells for roving comrades made,  
Warm valleys where the tired student lies  
With half-shut book, and many a winding  
walk  
Where rustic lovers stray at eve in happy simple  
talk.

The harmless rabbit gambols with its young  
Across the trampled towing-path, where late  
A troop of laughing boys in jostling throng  
Cheered with their noisy cries the racing  
eight ;

The gossamer, with ravelled silver threads,  
Works at its little loom, and from the dusky  
red-eaved sheds

Of the lone Farm a flickering light shines out  
Where the swinked shepherd drives his bleat-  
ing flock  
Back to their wattled sheep-cotes, a faint shout  
Comes from some Oxford boat at Sandford  
lock,

And starts the moor-hen from the sedgy rill,  
And the dim lengthening shadows flit like  
    swallows up the hill.

The heron passes homeward to the mere,  
    The blue mist creeps among the shivering  
        trees,  
Gold world by world the silent stars appear,  
    And like a blossom blown before the breeze  
A white moon drifts across the shimmering  
    sky,  
Mute arbitress of all thy sad, thy rapturous  
    threnody.

She does not heed thee, wherefore should she  
    heed,  
    She knows Endymion is not far away ;  
'T is I, 't is I, whose soul is as the reed  
    Which has no message of its own to play,  
So pipes another's bidding, it is I,  
Drifting with every wind on the wide sea of  
    misery.

Ah ! the brown bird has ceased : one exquisite  
    trill  
    About the sombre woodland seems to cling  
Dying in music, else the air is still,  
    So still that one might hear the bat's small  
        wing



Wander and wheel above the pines, or tell  
Each tiny dew-drop dripping from the bluebell's  
    brimming cell.

And far away across the lengthening wold,  
    Across the willowy flats and thickets brown,  
Magdalen's tall tower tipped with tremulous  
    gold

    Marks the long High Street of the little town,  
And warns me to return ; I must not wait,  
Hark ! 't is the curfew booming from the bell at  
    Christ Church gate.

## **WIND FLOWERS**



## IMPRESSION DU MATIN

**T**HE Thames nocturne of blue and gold  
    Changed to a Harmony in grey :  
    A barge with ochre-coloured hay  
Dropt from the wharf: and chill and cold

The yellow fog came creeping down  
    The bridges, till the houses' walls  
    Seemed changed to shadows and St. Paul's  
Loomed like a bubble o'er the town.

Then suddenly arose the clang  
    Of waking life ; the streets were stirred  
    With country waggons : and a bird  
Flew to the glistening roofs and sang.

But one pale woman all alone,  
    The daylight kissing her wan hair,  
    Loitered beneath the gas lamps' flare,  
With lips of flame and heart of stone.

## MAGDALEN WALKS

THE little white clouds are racing over the  
sky,

And the fields are strewn with the gold of the  
flower of March,

The daffodil breaks under foot, and the  
tasselled larch

Sways and swings as the thrush goes hurrying by.

A delicate odour is borne on the wings of the  
morning breeze,

The odour of deep wet grass, and of brown  
new-furrowed earth,

The birds are singing for joy of the Spring's  
glad birth,

Hopping from branch to branch on the rocking  
trees.

And all the woods are alive with the murmur  
and sound of Spring,

And the rose-bud breaks into pink on the  
climbing briar,

And the crocus-bed is a quivering moon of fire  
Girdled round with the belt of an amethyst ring.

And the plane to the pine-tree is whispering  
some tale of love  
Till it rustles with laughter and tosses its  
mantle of green,  
And the gloom of the wych-elm's hollow is lit  
with the iris sheen  
Of the burnished rainbow throat and the silver  
breast of a dove.

See ! the lark starts up from his bed in the  
meadow there,  
Breaking the gossamer threads and the nets  
of dew,  
And flashing adown the river, a flame of blue !  
The kingfisher flies like an arrow, and wounds  
the air.

## ATHANASIA

TO that gaunt House of Art which lacks for  
naught

Of all the great things men have saved from  
Time,

The withered body of a girl was brought

Dead ere the world's glad youth had touched  
its prime,

And seen by lonely Arabs lying hid

In the dim womb of some black pyramid.

But when they had unloosed the linen band

Which swathed the Egyptian's body,—lo!  
was found

Closed in the wasted hollow of her hand

A little seed, which sown in English ground

Did wondrous snow of starry blossoms bear

And spread rich odours through our spring-tide  
air.

With such strange arts this flower did allure

That all forgotten was the asphodel,

And the brown bee, the lily's paramour,

Forsook the cup where he was wont to dwell,

For not a thing of earth it seemed to be,

But stolen from some heavenly Arcady.

In vain the sad narcissus, wan and white  
At its own beauty, hung across the stream,  
The purple dragon-fly had no delight  
With its gold dust to make his wings a-gleam,  
Ah ! no delight the jasmine-bloom to kiss,  
Or brush the rain-pearls from the eucharis.

For love of it the passionate nightingale  
Forgot the hills of Thrace, the cruel king,  
And the pale dove no longer cared to sail  
Through the wet woods at time of blossoming,  
But round this flower of Egypt sought to float,  
With silvered wing and amethystine throat.

While the hot sun blazed in his tower of blue  
A cooling wind crept from the land of snows,  
And the warm south with tender tears of dew  
Drenched its white leaves when Hesperos  
up-rose  
Amid those sea-green meadows of the sky  
On which the scarlet bars of sunset lie.

But when o'er wastes of lily-haunted field  
The tired birds had stayed their amorous  
tune,  
And broad and glittering like an argent shield  
High in the sapphire heavens hung the moon,  
Did no strange dream or evil memory make  
Each tremulous petal of its blossoms shake ?



Ah no ! to this bright flower a thousand years  
Seemed but the lingering of a summer's day,  
It never knew the tide of cankering fears  
Which turn a boy's gold hair to withered  
grey,  
The dread desire of death it never knew,  
Or how all folk that they were born must rue.

For we to death with pipe and dancing go,  
Nor would we pass the ivory gate again,  
As some sad river wearied of its flow  
Through the dull plains, the haunts of com-  
mon men,  
Leaps lover-like into the terrible sea !  
And counts it gain to die so gloriously.

We mar our lordly strength in barren strife  
With the world's legions led by clamorous  
care,  
It never feels decay but gathers life  
From the pure sunlight and the supreme air,  
We live beneath Time's wasting sovereignty,  
It is the child of all eternity.

## SERENADE

(FOR MUSIC)

THE western wind is blowing fair  
Across the dark Ægean sea,  
And at the secret marble stair  
My Tyrian galley waits for thee.  
Come down! the purple sail is spread,  
The watchman sleeps within the town,  
O leave thy lily-flowered bed,  
O Lady mine come down, come down!

She will not come, I know her well,  
Of lover's vows she hath no care,  
And little good a man can tell  
Of one so cruel and so fair.  
True love is but a woman's toy,  
They never know the lover's pain,  
And I who loved as loves a boy  
Must love in vain, must love in vain.

O noble pilot, tell me true,  
Is that the sheen of golden hair?  
Or is it but the tangled dew  
That binds the passion-flowers there?

Ah good sailor come and tell me now  
Is that my Lady's lily hand?  
Or is it but the gleaming prow,  
Or is it but the silver sand?

No! no! 'tis not the tangled dew,  
'Tis not the silver-fretted sand,  
It is my own dear Lady true  
With golden hair and lily hand!  
O noble pilot, steer for Troy,  
Good sailor, ply the labouring oar,  
This is the Queen of life and joy  
Whom we must bear from Grecian shore!

The waning sky grows faint and blue,  
It wants an hour still of day,  
Aboard! aboard! my gallant crew,  
O Lady mine, away! away!  
O noble pilot, steer for Troy,  
Good sailor, ply the labouring oar,  
O loved as only loves a boy!  
O loved for ever evermore!

## ENDYMION

(FOR MUSIC)

THE apple trees are hung with gold,  
And birds are loud in Arcady,  
The sheep lie bleating in the fold,  
The wild goat runs across the wold,  
But yesterday his love he told,  
I know he will come back to me.  
O rising moon ! O Lady moon !  
Be you my lover's sentinel,  
You cannot choose but know him well,  
For he is shod with purple shoon,  
You cannot choose but know my love,  
For he a shepherd's crook doth bear,  
And he is soft as any dove,  
And brown and curly is his hair.

The turtle now has ceased to call  
Upon her crimson-footed groom,  
The grey wolf prowls about the stall,  
The lily's singing seneschal  
Sleeps in the lily-bell, and all  
The violet hills are lost in gloom.

O risen moon ! O holy moon !  
Stand on the top of Helice,  
And if my own true love you see,  
Ah ! if you see the purple shoon,  
The hazel crook, the lad's brown hair,  
The goat-skin wrapped about his arm,  
Tell him that I am waiting where  
The rushlight glimmers in the Farm.

The falling dew is cold and chill,  
And no bird sings in Arcady,  
The little fauns have left the hill,  
Even the tired daffodil  
Has closed its gilded doors, and still  
My lover comes not back to me.  
False moon ! False moon ! O waning moon !  
Where is my own true lover gone,  
Where are the lips vermilion,  
The shepherd's crook, the purple shoon ?  
Why spread that silver pavilion,  
Why wear that veil of drifting mist ?  
Ah ! thou hast young Endymion,  
Thou hast the lips that should be kissed !

LA BELLA DONNA DELLA MIA  
MENTE

**M**Y limbs are wasted with a flame,  
My feet are sore with travelling,  
For, calling on my Lady's name,  
My lips have now forgot to sing.

O Linnet in the wild-rose brake  
Strain for my Love thy melody,  
O Lark sing louder for love's sake,  
My gentle Lady passeth by.

She is too fair for any man  
To see or hold his heart's delight,  
Fairer than Queen or courtesan  
Or moonlit water in the night.

Her hair is bound with myrtle leaves,  
(Green leaves upon her golden hair !)  
Green grasses through the yellow sheaves  
Of autumn corn are not more fair.

Her little lips, more made to kiss  
Than to cry bitterly for pain,  
Are tremulous as brook-water is,  
Or roses after evening rain.

Her neck is like white melilote  
Flushing for pleasure of the sun,  
The throbbing of the linnet's throat  
Is not so sweet to look upon.

As a pomegranate, cut in twain,  
White-seeded, is her crimson mouth,  
Her cheeks are as the fading stain  
Where the peach reddens to the south.

O twining hands ! O delicate  
White body made for love and pain !  
O House of love ! O desolate  
Pale flower beaten by the rain !

## CHANSON

A RING of gold and a milk-white dove  
Are goodly gifts for thee,  
And a hempen rope for your own love  
To hang upon a tree.

For you a House of Ivory,  
(Roses are white in the rose-bower) !  
A narrow bed for me to lie,  
(White, O white, is the hemlock flower) !

Myrtle and jessamine for you,  
(O the red rose is fair to see) !  
For me the cypress and the rue,  
(Finest of all is rosemary) !

For you three lovers of your hand,  
(Green grass where a man lies dead) !  
For me three paces on the sand,  
(Plant lilies at my head) !





## CHARMIDES



## CHARMIDES

### I

**H**E was a Grecian lad, who coming home  
With pulpy figs and wine from Sicily  
Stood at his galley's prow, and let the foam  
Blow through his crisp brown curls uncon-  
sciously,  
And holding wave and wind in boy's despite  
Peered from his dripping seat across the wet  
and stormy night.

Till with the dawn he saw a burnished spear  
Like a thin thread of gold against the sky,  
And hoisted sail, and strained the creaking gear,  
And bade the pilot head her lustily  
Against the nor'west gale, and all day long  
Held on his way, and marked the rowers' time  
with measured song,

And when the faint Corinthian hills were red  
Dropped anchor in a little sandy bay,  
And with fresh boughs of olive crowned his  
head,

And brushed from cheek and throat the  
    hoary spray,  
And washed his limbs with oil, and from the  
    hold  
Brought out his linen tunic and his sandals  
    brazen-soled,

And a rich robe stained with the fishes' juice  
    Which of some swarthy trader he had bought  
Upon the sunny quay at Syracuse,  
    And was with Tyrian broideries inwrought,  
And by the questioning merchants made his way  
Up through the soft and silver woods, and when  
    the labouring day

Had spun its tangled web of crimson cloud,  
    Clomb the high hill, and with swift silent feet  
Crept to the fane unnoticed by the crowd  
    Of busy priests, and from some dark retreat  
Watched the young swains his frolic playmates  
    bring  
The firstling of their little flock, and the shy  
    shepherd fling

The crackling salt upon the flame, or hang  
    His studded crook against the temple wall  
To Her who keeps away the ravenous fang  
    Of the base wolf from homestead and from  
    stall;

And then the clear-voiced maidens 'gan to sing,  
And to the altar each man brought some goodly  
offering,

A beechen cup brimming with milky foam,  
A fair cloth wrought with cunning imagery  
Of hounds in chase, a waxen honey-comb  
Dripping with oozy gold which scarce the  
bee  
Had ceased from building, a black skin of oil  
Meet for the wrestlers, a great boar the fierce  
and white-tusked spoil

Stolen from Artemis that jealous maid  
To please Athena, and the dappled hide  
Of a tall stag who in some mountain glade  
Had met the shaft; and then the herald  
cried,  
And from the pillared precinct one by one  
Went the glad Greeks well pleased that they  
their simple vows had done.

And the old priest put out the waning fires  
Save that one lamp whose restless ruby glowed  
For ever in the cell, and the shrill lyres  
Came fainter on the wind, as down the road  
In joyous dance these country folk did pass,  
And with stout hands the warder closed the  
gates of polished brass.

Long time he lay and hardly dared to breathe,  
And heard the cadenced drip of spilt-out wine,  
And the rose-petals falling from the wreath  
As the night breezes wandered through the  
shrine,  
And seemed to be in some entranced swoon  
Till through the open roof above the full and  
brimming moon

Flooded with sheeny waves the marble floor,  
When from his nook up leapt the venturous  
lad,  
And flinging wide the cedar-carven door  
Beheld an awful image saffron-clad  
And armed for battle! the gaunt Griffin glared  
From the huge helm, and the long lance of  
wreck and ruin flared

Like a red rod of flame, stony and steeled  
The Gorgon's head its leaden eyeballs rolled,  
And writhed its snaky horrors through the  
shield,  
And gaped aghast with bloodless lips and cold  
In passion impotent, while with blind gaze  
The blinking owl between the feet hooted in  
shrill amaze.

The lonely fisher as he trimmed his lamp  
Far out at sea off Sunium, or cast  
The net for tunnies, heard a brazen tramp

Of horses smite the waves, and a wild blast  
Divide the folded curtains of the night,  
And knelt upon the little poop, and prayed in  
holy fright.

And guilty lovers in their venery  
Forgot a little while their stolen sweets,  
Deeming they heard dread Dian's bitter cry ;  
And the grim watchmen on their lofty seats  
Ran to their shields in haste precipitate,  
Or strained black-bearded throats across the  
dusky parapet.

For round the temple rolled the clang of arms,  
And the twelve Gods leapt up in marble  
fear,  
And the air quaked with dissonant alarums  
Till huge Poseidon shook his mighty spear,  
And on the frieze the prancing horses neighed,  
And the low tread of hurrying feet rang from  
the cavalcade.

Ready for death with parted lips he stood,  
And well content at such a price to see  
That calm wide brow, that terrible maidenhood,  
The marvel of that pitiless chastity,  
Ah ! well content indeed, for never wight  
Since Troy's young shepherd prince had seen so  
wonderful a sight.



Ready for death he stood, but lo ! the air  
Grew silent, and the horses ceased to neigh,  
And off his brow he tossed the clustering hair,  
And from his limbs he threw the cloak away ;  
For whom would not such love make desperate ?  
And nigher came, and touched her throat, and  
with hands violate

Undid the cuirass, and the crocus gown,  
And bared the breasts of polished ivory,  
Till from the waist the peplos falling down  
Left visible the secret mystery  
Which to no lover will Athena show,  
The grand cool flanks, the crescent thighs, the  
bossy hills of snow.

Those who have never known a lover's sin  
Let them not read my ditty, it will be  
To their dull ears so musicless and thin  
That they will have no joy of it, but ye  
To whose wan cheeks now creeps the lingering  
smile,  
Ye who have learned who Eros is,—O listen  
yet awhile.

A little space he let his greedy eyes  
Rest on the burnished image, till mere sight  
Half swooned for surfeit of such luxuries,  
And then his lips in hungering delight

Fed on her lips, and round the towered neck  
He flung his arms, nor cared at all his passion's  
will to check.

Never I ween did lover hold such tryst,  
For all night long he murmured honeyed  
word,  
And saw her sweet unravished limbs, and kissed  
Her pale and argent body undisturbed,  
And paddled with the polished throat, and  
pressed  
His hot and beating heart upon her chill and  
icy breast.

It was as if Numidian javelins  
Pierced through and through his wild and  
whirling brain,  
And his nerves thrilled like throbbing violins  
In exquisite pulsation, and the pain  
Was such sweet anguish that he never drew  
His lips from hers till overhead the lark of  
warning flew.

They who have never seen the daylight peer  
Into a darkened room, and drawn the curtain,  
And with dull eyes and wearied from some dear  
And worshipped body risen, they for certain  
Will never know of what I try to sing,  
How long the last kiss was, how fond and late  
his lingering.

The moon was girdled with a crystal rim,  
The sign which shipmen say is ominous  
Of wrath in heaven, the wan stars were dim,  
And the low lightening east was tremulous  
With the faint fluttering wings of flying dawn,  
Ere from the silent sombre shrine his lover had  
withdrawn.

Down the steep rock with hurried feet and  
fast  
Clomb the brave lad, and reached the cave of  
Pan,  
And heard the goat-foot snoring as he passed,  
And leapt upon a grassy knoll and ran  
Like a young fawn unto an olive wood  
Which in a shady valley by the well-built city  
stood;

And sought a little stream, which well he knew,  
For oftentimes with boyish careless shout  
The green and crested grebe he would pursue,  
Or snare in woven net the silver trout,  
And down amid the startled reeds he lay  
Panting in breathless sweet affright, and waited  
for the day.

On the green bank he lay, and let one hand  
Dip in the cool dark eddies listlessly,  
And soon the breath of morning came and fanned  
His hot flushed cheeks, or lifted wantonly

The tangled curls from off his forehead, while  
He on the running water gazed with strange  
and secret smile.

And soon the shepherd in rough woollen cloak  
With his long crook undid the wattled cotes,  
And from the stack a thin blue wreath of smoke  
Curled through the air across the ripening  
oats,  
And on the hill the yellow house-dog bayed  
As through the crisp and rustling fern the heavy  
cattle strayed.

And when the light-foot mower went afield  
Across the meadows laced with threaded  
dew,  
And the sheep bleated on the misty weald,  
And from its nest the waking corncrake  
flew,  
Some woodmen saw him lying by the stream  
And marvelled much that any lad so beautiful  
could seem,

Nor deemed him born of mortals, and one said,  
'It is young Hylas, that false runaway  
Who with a Naiad now would make his bed  
Forgetting Herakles,' but others, 'Nay,  
It is Narcissus, his own paramour,  
Those are the fond and crimson lips no woman  
can allure.'

And when they nearer came a third one cried,  
‘It is young Dionysos who has hid  
His spear and fawnskin by the river side  
Weary of hunting with the Bassarid,  
And wise indeed were we away to fly :  
They live not long who on the gods immortal  
come to spy.’

So turned they back, and feared to look behind,  
And told the timid swain how they had seen  
Amid the reeds some woodland God reclined,  
And no man dared to cross the open green,  
And on that day no olive-tree was slain,  
Nor rushes cut, but all deserted was the fair  
domain,

Save when the neat-herd’s lad, his empty pail  
Well slung upon his back, with leap and  
bound  
Raced on the other side, and stopped to hail,  
Hoping that he some comrade new had found,  
And gat no answer, and then half afraid  
Passed on his simple way, or down the still and  
silent glade

A little girl ran laughing from the farm,  
Not thinking of love’s secret mysteries,  
And when she saw the white and gleaming  
arm  
And all his manlihood, with longing eyes

Whose passion mocked her sweet virginity  
Watched him awhile, and then stole back sadly  
and wearily.

Far off he heard the city's hum and noise,  
And now and then the shriller laughter where  
The passionate purity of brown-limbed boys  
Wrestled or raced in the clear healthful air,  
And now and then a little tinkling bell  
As the shorn wether led the sheep down to the  
mossy well.

Through the grey willows danced the fretful  
gnat,  
The grasshopper chirped idly from the tree,  
In sleek and oily coat the water-rat  
Breasting the little ripples manfully  
Made for the wild-duck's nest, from bough to  
bough  
Hopped the shy finch, and the huge tortoise  
crept across the slough.

On the faint wind floated the silky seeds  
As the bright scythe swept through the  
waving grass,  
The ouzel-cock splashed circles in the reeds  
And flecked with silver whorls the forest's  
glass,

Which scarce had caught again its imagery  
Ere from its bed the dusky tench leapt at the  
dragon-fly.

But little care had he for any thing  
Though up and down the beech the squirrel  
played,  
And from the copse the linnet 'gan to sing  
To her brown mate her sweetest serenade ;  
Ah ! little care indeed, for he had seen  
The breasts of Pallas and the naked wonder of  
the Queen.

But when the herdsman called his straggling  
goats  
With whistling pipe across the rocky road,  
And the shard-beetle with its trumpet-notes  
Boomed through the darkening woods, and  
seemed to bode  
Of coming storm, and the belated crane  
Passed homeward like a shadow, and the dull  
big drops of rain

Fell on the pattering fig-leaves, up he rose,  
And from the gloomy forest went his way  
Past sombre homestead and wet orchard-close,  
And came at last unto a little quay,  
And called his mates aboard, and took his seat  
On the high poop, and pushed from land, and  
loosed the dripping sheet,

And steered across the bay, and when nine suns  
Passed down the long and laddered way of gold,  
And nine pale moons had breathed their orisons  
To the chaste stars their confessors, or told  
Their dearest secret to the downy moth  
That will not fly at noonday, through the foam  
and surging froth

Came a great owl with yellow sulphurous eyes  
And lit upon the ship, whose timbers creaked  
As though the lading of three argosies  
Were in the hold, and flapped its wings and  
shrieked,  
And darkness straightway stole across the deep,  
Sheathed was Orion's sword, dread Mars him-  
self fled down the steep,

And the moon hid behind a tawny mask  
Of drifting cloud, and from the ocean's marge  
Rose the red plume, the huge and hornèd  
casque,  
The seven-cubit spear, the brazen targe!  
And clad in bright and burnished panoply  
Athena strode across the stretch of sick and  
shivering sea!

'To the dull sailors' sight her loosened locks  
Seemed like the jagged storm-rack, and her  
feet  
Only the spume that floats on hidden rocks,



And, marking how the rising waters beat  
Against the rolling ship, the pilot cried  
To the young helmsman at the stern to huff to  
windward side.

But he, the overbold adulterer,  
A dear profaner of great mysteries,  
An ardent amorous idolater,  
When he beheld those grand relentless eyes  
Laughed loud for joy, and crying out 'I come'  
Leapt from the lofty poop into the chill and  
churning foam.

Then fell from the high heaven one bright  
star,  
One dancer left the circling galaxy,  
And back to Athens on her clattering car  
In all the pride of venged divinity  
Pale Pallas swept with shrill and steely clank,  
And a few gurgling bubbles rose where her boy  
lover sank.

And the mast shuddered as the gaunt owl flew  
With mocking hoots after the wrathful  
Queen,  
And the old pilot bade the trembling crew  
Hoist the big sail, and told how he had seen  
Close to the stern a dim and giant form,  
And like a dipping swallow the stout ship  
dashed through the storm.

And no man dared to speak of Charmides  
Deeming that he some evil thing had wrought,  
And when they reached the strait Symplegades  
They beached their galley on the shore, and  
sought  
The toll-gate of the city hastily,  
And in the market showed their brown and  
pictured pottery.

## II

BUT some good Triton-god had ruth, and  
bare

The boy's drowned body back to Grecian  
land,

And mermaids combed his dank and dripping  
hair

And smoothed his brow, and loosed his  
clenching hand,

Some brought sweet spices from far Araby,  
And others bade the halcyon sing her softest  
lullaby.

And when he neared his old Athenian home,

A mighty billow rose up suddenly

Upon whose oily back the clotted foam

Lay diapered in some strange fantasy,

And clasping him unto its glassy breast

Swept landward, like a white-maned steed upon  
a venturous quest!

Now where Colonos leans unto the sea

There lies a long and level stretch of lawn;

The rabbit knows it, and the mountain bee

For it deserts Hymettus, and the Faun  
Is not afraid, for never through the day  
Comes a cry ruder than the shout of shepherd  
    lads at play.

But often from the thorny labyrinth  
    And tangled branches of the circling wood  
The stealthy hunter sees young Hyacinth  
    Hurling the polished disk, and draws his hood  
Over his guilty gaze, and creeps away,  
Nor dares to wind his horn, or—else at the first  
    break of day

The Dryads come and throw the leathern ball  
    Along the reedy shore, and circumvent  
Some goat-eared Pan to be their seneschal  
    For fear of bold Poseidon's ravishment,  
And loose their girdles, with shy timorous eyes,  
Lest from the surf his azure arms and purple  
    beard should rise.

On this side and on that a rocky cave,  
    Hung with the yellow-belled laburnum, stands ;  
Smooth is the beach, save where some ebbing  
    wave

Leaves its faint outline etched upon the sands,  
As though it feared to be too soon forgot  
By the green rush, its playfellow,—and yet, it  
    is a spot

So small, that the inconstant butterfly  
    Could steal the hoarded money from each  
        flower  
Ere it was noon, and still not satisfy  
    Its over-greedy love,—within an hour  
A sailor boy, were he but rude enow  
To land and pluck a garland for his galley's  
    painted prow,

Would almost leave the little meadow bare,  
    For it knows nothing of great pageantry,  
Only a few narcissi here and there  
    Stand separate in sweet austerity,  
Dotting the un-mown grass with silver stars,  
And here and there a daffodil waves tiny  
    scimitars.

Hither the billow brought him, and was glad  
    Of such dear servitude, and where the land  
Was virgin of all waters laid the lad  
    Upon the golden margent of the strand,  
And like a lingering lover oft returned  
To kiss those pallid limbs which once with  
    intense fire burned,

Ere the wet seas had quenched that holocaust,  
    That self-fed flame, that passionate lustihead,  
Ere grisly death with chill and nipping frost

Had withered up those lilies white and red  
Which, while the boy would through the forest  
    range,  
Answered each other in a sweet antiphonal  
    counter-change.

And when at dawn the wood-nymphs, hand-in-  
    hand,  
    Threaded the bosky dell, their satyr spied  
The boy's pale body stretched upon the sand,  
    And feared Poseidon's treachery, and cried,  
And like bright sunbeams flitting through a  
    glade  
Each startled Dryad sought some safe and leafy  
    ambuscade,

Save one white girl, who deemed it would not be  
    So dread a thing to feel a sea-god's arms  
Crushing her breasts in amorous tyranny,  
    And longed to listen to those subtle charms  
Insidious lovers weave when they would win  
Some fencèd fortress, and stole back again, nor  
    thought it sin

To yield her treasure unto one so fair,  
    And lay beside him, thirsty with love's drouth,  
Called him soft names, played with his tangled  
    hair,  
    And with hot lips made havoc of his mouth

Afraid he might not wake, and then afraid  
Lest he might wake too soon, fled back, and  
then, fond renegade,

Returned to fresh assault, and all day long  
Sat at his side, and laughed at her new toy,  
And held his hand, and sang her sweetest song,  
Then frowned to see how froward was the boy  
Who would not with her maidenhood entwine,  
Nor knew that three days since his eyes had  
looked on Proserpine,

Nor knew what sacrilege his lips had done,  
But said, ' He will awake, I know him well,  
He will awake at evening when the sun  
Hangs his red shield on Corinth's citadel ;  
This sleep is but a cruel treachery  
To make me love him more, and in some cavern  
of the sea

Deeper than ever falls the fisher's line  
Already a huge Triton blows his horn,  
And weaves a garland from the crystalline  
And drifting ocean-tendrils to adorn  
The emerald pillars of our bridal bed,  
For sphered in foaming silver, and with coral  
crownèd head,

We two will sit upon a throne of pearl,  
And a blue wave will be our canopy,

And at our feet the water-snakes will curl  
In all their amethystine panoply  
Of diamonded mail, and we will mark  
The mullets swimming by the mast of some  
storm-foundered bark,

Vermilion-finned with eyes of bossy gold  
Like flakes of crimson light, and the great  
deep  
His glassy-portaled chamber will unfold,  
And we will see the painted dolphins sleep  
Cradled by murmuring halcyons on the rocks  
Where Proteus in quaint suit of green pastures  
his monstrous flocks.

And tremulous opal-hued anemones  
Will wave their purple fringes where we tread  
Upon the mirrored floor, and argosies  
Of fishes flecked with tawny scales will thread  
The drifting cordage of the shattered wreck.  
And honey-coloured amber beads our twining  
limbs will deck.'

But when that baffled Lord of War the Sun  
With gaudy pennon flying passed away  
Into his brazen House, and one by one  
The little yellow stars began to stray  
Across the field of heaven, ah! then indeed  
She feared his lips upon her lips would never  
care to feed,



And cried, 'Awake, already the pale moon  
Washes the trees with silver, and the wave  
Creeps grey and chilly up this sandy dune,  
The croaking frogs are out, and from the  
cave  
The night-jar shrieks, the fluttering bats repass,  
And the brown stoat with hollow flanks creeps  
through the dusky grass.

Nay, though thou art a God, be not so coy,  
For in yon stream there is a little reed  
That often whispers how a lovely boy  
Lay with her once upon a grassy mead,  
Who when his cruel pleasure he had done  
Spread wings of rustling gold and soared aloft  
into the sun.

Be not so coy, the laurel trembles still  
With great Apollo's kisses, and the fir  
Whose clustering sisters fringe the seaward hill  
Hath many a tale of that bold ravisher  
Whom men call Boreas, and I have seen  
The mocking eyes of Hermes through the  
poplar's silvery sheen.

Even the jealous Naiads call me fair,  
And every morn a young and ruddy swain  
Woos me with apples and with locks of hair,  
And seeks to soothe my virginal disdain

By all the gifts the gentle wood-nymphs love ;  
But yesterday he brought to me an iris-plumaged  
dove

With little crimson feet, which with its store  
Of seven spotted eggs the cruel lad  
Had stolen from the lofty sycamore  
At daybreak, when her amorous comrade had  
Flown off in search of berried juniper  
Which most they love ; the fretful wasp, that  
earliest vintager

Of the blue grapes, hath not persistency  
So constant as this simple shepherd-boy  
For my poor lips, his joyous purity  
And laughing sunny eyes might well decoy  
A Dryad from her oath to Artemis ;  
For very beautiful is he, his mouth was made  
to kiss ;

His argent forehead, like a rising moon  
Over the dusky hills of meeting brows,  
Is crescent shaped, the hot and Tyrian noon  
Leads from the myrtle-grove no goodlier  
spouse  
For Cytheræa, the first silky down  
Fringes his blushing cheeks, and his young  
limbs are strong and brown :

And he is rich, and fat and fleecy herds  
Of bleating sheep upon his meadows lie,  
And many an earthen bowl of yellow curds  
Is in his homestead for the thievish fly  
To swim and drown in, the pink clover mead  
Keeps its sweet store for him, and he can pipe  
on oaten reed.

And yet I love him not; it was for thee  
I kept my love; I knew that thou would'st  
come  
To rid me of this pallid chastity,  
Thou fairest flower of the flowerless foam  
Of all the wide Ægean, brightest star  
Of ocean's azure heavens where the mirrored  
planets are!

I knew that thou would'st come, for when at first  
The dry wood burgeoned, and the sap of  
Spring  
Swelled in my green and tender bark or burst  
To myriad multitudinous blossoming  
Which mocked the midnight with its mimic  
moons  
That did not dread the dawn, and first the  
thrushes' rapturous tunes

Startled the squirrel from its granary,  
And cuckoo flowers fringed the narrow lane,  
Through my young leaves a sensuous ecstasy

Crept like new wine, and every mossy vein  
Throbb'd with the fitful pulse of amorous blood,  
And the wild winds of passion shook my slim  
stem's maidenhood.

The trooping fawns at evening came and laid  
Their cool black noses on my lowest boughs,  
And on my topmost branch the blackbird made  
A little nest of grasses for his spouse,  
And now and then a twittering wren would light  
On a thin twig which hardly bare the weight of  
such delight.

I was the Attic shepherd's trysting place,  
Beneath my shadow Amaryllis lay,  
And round my trunk would laughing Daphnis  
chase

The timorous girl, till tired out with play  
She felt his hot breath stir her tangled hair,  
And turned, and looked, and fled no more from  
such delightful snare.

Then come away unto my ambushade  
Where clustering woodbine weaves a canopy  
For amorous pleasaunce, and the rustling shade  
Of Paphian myrtles seems to sanctify  
The dearest rites of love ; there in the cool  
And green recesses of its farthest depth there is  
a pool,

The ouzel's haunt, the wild bee's pasturage,  
For round its rim great creamy lilies float  
Through their flat leaves in verdant anchorage,  
Each cup a white-sailed golden-laden boat  
Steered by a dragon-fly,—be not afraid  
To leave this wan and wave-kissed shore, surely  
the place was made

For lovers such as we ; the Cyprian Queen,  
One arm around her boyish paramour,  
Strays often there at eve, and I have seen  
The moon strip off her misty vestiture  
For young Endymion's eyes ; be not afraid,  
The panther feet of Dian never tread that secret  
glade.

Nay if thou will'st, back to the beating brine,  
Back to the boisterous billow let us go,  
And walk all day beneath the hyaline  
Huge vault of Neptune's watery portico,  
And watch the purple monsters of the deep  
Sport in ungainly play, and from his lair keen  
Xiphias leap.

For if my mistress find me lying here  
She will not ruth or gentle pity show,  
But lay her boar-spear down, and with austere  
Relentless fingers string the cornel bow,

And draw the feathered notch against her breast,  
And loose the archèd cord ; ay, even now upon  
the quest

I hear her hurrying feet,—awake, awake,  
Thou laggard in love's battle ! once at least  
Let me drink deep of passion's wine, and slake  
My parchèd being with the nectarous feast  
Which even Gods affect ! O come, Love, come,  
Still we have time to reach the cavern of thine  
azure home.'

Scarce had she spoken when the shuddering  
trees

Shook, and the leaves divided, and the air  
Grew conscious of a God, and the grey seas  
Crawled backward, and a long and dismal  
blare

Blew from some tasselled horn, a sleuth-hound  
bayed,

And like a flame a barbèd reed flew whizzing  
down the glade.

And where the little flowers of her breast  
Just brake into their milky blossoming,  
This murderous paramour, this unbidden guest,  
Pierced and struck deep in horrid chambering,  
And ploughed a bloody furrow with its dart,  
And dug a long red road, and cleft with wingèd  
death her heart.

Sobbing her life out with a bitter cry  
On the boy's body fell the Dryad maid,  
Sobbing for incomplete virginity,  
And raptures unenjoyed, and pleasures dead,  
And all the pain of things unsatisfied,  
And the bright drops of crimson youth crept  
down her throbbing side.

Ah ! pitiful it was to hear her moan,  
And very pitiful to see her die  
Ere she had yielded up her sweets, or known  
The joy of passion, that dread mystery  
Which not to know is not to live at all,  
And yet to know is to be held in death's most  
deadly thrall.

But as it hapt the Queen of Cythere,  
Who with Adonis all night long had lain  
Within some shepherd's hut in Arcady,  
On team of silver doves and gilded wain  
Was journeying Paphos-ward, high up afar  
From mortal ken between the mountains and  
the morning star,

And when low down she spied the hapless pair,  
And heard the Oread's faint despairing cry,  
Whose cadence seemed to play upon the air  
As though it were a viol, hastily

She bade her pigeons fold each straining plume,  
And dropt to earth, and reached the strand, and  
saw their dolorous doom.

For as a gardener turning back his head  
To catch the last notes of the linnet, mows  
With careless scythe too near some flower bed,  
And cuts the thorny pillar of the rose,  
And with the flower's loosened loveliness  
Strews the brown mould; or as some shepherd  
lad in wantonness

Driving his little flock along the mead  
Treads down two daffodils, which side by  
side  
Have lured the lady-bird with yellow brede  
And made the gaudy moth forget its pride,  
Treads down their brimming golden chalices  
Under light feet which were not made for such  
rude ravages;

Or as a schoolboy tired of his book  
Flings himself down upon the reedy grass  
And plucks two water-lilies from the brook,  
And for a time forgets the hour glass,  
Then wearies of their sweets, and goes his  
way,  
And lets the hot sun kill them, even so these  
lovers lay.



And Venus cried, 'It is dread Artemis  
Whose bitter hand hath wrought this cruelty,  
Or else that mightier maid whose care it is  
To guard her strong and stainless majesty  
Upon the hill Athenian,—alas!  
That they who loved so well unloved into death's  
house should pass.'

So with soft hands she laid the boy and girl  
In the great golden waggon tenderly,  
Her white throat whiter than a moony pearl  
Just threaded with a blue vein's tapestry  
Had not yet ceased to throb, and still her breast  
Swayed like a wind-stirred lily in ambiguous  
unrest.

And then each pigeon spread its milky van,  
The bright car soared into the dawning sky,  
And like a cloud the aerial caravan  
Passed over the Ægean silently,  
Till the faint air was troubled with the song  
From the wan mouths that call on bleeding  
Thammuz all night long.

But when the doves had reached their wonted  
goal  
Where the wide stair of orbèd marble dips  
Its snows into the sea, her fluttering soul  
Just shook the trembling petals of her lips

And passed into the void, and Venus knew  
That one fair maid the less would walk amid  
her retinue,

And bade her servants carve a cedar chest  
With all the wonder of this history,  
Within whose scented womb their limbs should  
rest

Where olive-trees make tender the blue sky  
On the low hills of Paphos, and the Faun  
Pipes in the noonday, and the nightingale sings  
on till dawn.

Nor failed they to obey her hest, and ere  
The morning bee had stung the daffodil  
With tiny fretful spear, or from its lair  
The waking stag had leapt across the rill  
And roused the ouzel, or the lizard crept  
Athwart the sunny rock, beneath the grass their  
bodies slept.

And when day brake, within that silver shrine  
Fed by the flames of cressets tremulous,  
Queen Venus knelt and prayed to Proserpine  
That she whose beauty made Death amorous  
Should beg a guerdon from her pallid Lord,  
And let Desire pass across dread Charon's icy  
ford.

## III

I N melancholy moonless Acheron,  
Far from the goodly earth and joyous day,  
Where no spring ever buds, nor ripening sun  
Weighs down the apple trees, nor flowery  
May

Chequers with chestnut blooms the grassy floor,  
Where thrushes never sing, and piping linnets  
mate no more,

There by a dim and dark Lethæan well  
Young Charmides was lying ; wearily  
He plucked the blossoms from the asphodel,  
And with its little rifled treasury  
Strewed the dull waters of the dusky stream,  
And watched the white stars founder, and the  
land was like a dream,

When as he gazed into the watery glass  
And through his brown hair's curly tangles  
scanned  
His own wan face, a shadow seemed to pass  
Across the mirror, and a little hand

Stole into his, and warm lips timidly  
Brushed his pale cheeks, and breathed their  
secret forth into a sigh.

Then turned he round his weary eyes and saw,  
And ever nigher still their faces came,  
And nigher ever did their young mouths draw  
Until they seemed one perfect rose of flame,  
And longing arms around her neck he cast,  
And felt her throbbing bosom, and his breath  
came hot and fast,

And all his hoarded sweets were hers to kiss,  
And all her maidenhood was his to slay,  
And limb to limb in long and rapturous bliss  
Their passion waxed and waned,—O why  
essay  
To pipe again of love, too venturous reed !  
Enough, enough that Eros laughed upon that  
flowerless mead.

Too venturous poesy, O why essay  
To pipe again of passion ! fold thy wings  
O'er daring Icarus and bid thy lay  
Sleep hidden in the lyre's silent strings  
Till thou hast found the old Castalian rill,  
Or from the Lesbian waters plucked drowned  
Sappho's golden quill !

Enough, enough that he whose life had been  
A fiery pulse of sin, a splendid shame,  
Could in the loveless land of Hades glean  
One scorching harvest from those fields of  
flame  
Where passion walks with naked unshod feet  
And is not wounded,—ah! enough that once  
their lips could meet

In that wild throb when all existences  
Seemed narrowed to one single ecstasy  
Which dies through its own sweetness and the  
stress  
Of too much pleasure, ere Persephone  
Had bade them serve her by the ebon throne  
Of the pale God who in the fields of Enna  
loosed her zone.

## **FLOWERS OF GOLD**



## IMPRESSIONS

### I

#### LES SILHOUETTES

**T**HE sea is flecked with bars of grey,  
The dull dead wind is out of tune,  
And like a withered leaf the moon  
Is blown across the stormy bay.

Etched clear upon the pallid sand  
Lies the black boat : a sailor boy  
Clambers aboard in careless joy  
With laughing face and gleaming hand.

And overhead the curlews cry,  
Where through the dusky upland grass  
The young brown-throated reapers pass,  
Like silhouettes against the sky.



## II

## LA FUITE DE LA LUNE

TO outer senses there is peace,  
A dreamy peace on either hand  
Deep silence in the shadowy land,  
Deep silence where the shadows cease.

Save for a cry that echoes shrill  
From some lone bird disconsolate ;  
A corncrake calling to its mate ;  
The answer from the misty hill.

And suddenly the moon withdraws  
Her sickle from the lightening skies,  
And to her sombre cavern flies,  
Wrapped in a veil of yellow gauze.

## THE GRAVE OF KEATS

RID of the world's injustice, and his pain,  
He rests at last beneath God's veil of  
blue :

Taken from life when life and love were new  
The youngest of the martyrs here is lain,  
Fair as Sebastian, and as early slain.

No cypress shades his grave, no funeral yew,  
But gentle violets weeping with the dew  
Weave on his bones an ever-blossoming chain.  
O proudest heart that broke for misery !

O sweetest lips since those of Mitylene !  
O poet-painter of our English Land !  
Thy name was writ in water—it shall stand :  
And tears like mine will keep thy memory  
green,  
As Isabella did her Basil-tree.

ROME.

## THEOCRITUS

## A VILLANELLE

O SINGER of Persephone !  
In the dim meadows desolate  
Dost thou remember Sicily ?

Still through the ivy flits the bee  
Where Amaryllis lies in state ;  
O Singer of Persephone !

Simætha calls on Hecate  
And hears the wild dogs at the gate ;  
Dost thou remember Sicily ?

Still by the light and laughing sea  
Poor Polypheme bemoans his fate ;  
O Singer of Persephone !

And still in boyish rivalry  
Young Daphnis challenges his mate ;  
Dost thou remember Sicily ?

Slim Lacon keeps a goat for thee,  
For thee the jocund shepherds wait ;  
O Singer of Persephone !  
Dost thou remember Sicily ?

## IN THE GOLD ROOM

A HARMONY

**H**ER ivory hands on the ivory keys  
Strayed in a fitful fantasy,  
Like the silver gleam when the poplar trees  
Rustle their pale leaves listlessly,  
Or the drifting foam of a restless sea  
When the waves show their teeth in the flying  
breeze.

Her gold hair fell on the wall of gold  
Like the delicate gossamer tangles spun  
On the burnished disk of the marigold,  
Or the sunflower turning to meet the sun  
When the gloom of the dark blue night is  
done,  
And the spear of the lily is aureoled.

And her sweet red lips on these lips of mine  
Burned like the ruby fire set  
In the swinging lamp of a crimson shrine,  
Or the bleeding wounds of the pomegranate,  
Or the heart of the lotus drenched and wet  
With the spilt-out blood of the rose-red wine.

## BALLADE DE MARGUERITE

(NORMANDE)

I AM weary of lying within the chase  
When the knights are meeting in market-  
place.

Nay, go not thou to the red-roofed town  
Lest the hoofs of the war-horse tread thee down.

But I would not go where the Squires ride,  
I would only walk by my Lady's side.

Alack ! and alack ! thou art overbold,  
A Forester's son may not eat off gold.

Will she love me the less that my Father is seen  
Each Martinmas day in a doublet green ?

Perchance she is sewing at tapestry,  
Spindle and loom are not meet for thee.

Ah, if she is working the arras bright  
I might ravel the threads by the fire-light.

Perchance she is hunting of the deer,  
How could you follow o'er hill and mere?

Ah, if she is riding with the court,  
I might run beside her and wind the morte.

Perchance she is kneeling in St. Denys,  
(On her soul may our Lady have gramercy !)

Ah, if she is praying in lone chapelle,  
I might swing the censer and ring the bell.

Come in, my son, for you look sae pale,  
The father shall fill thee a stoup of ale.

But who are these knights in bright array?  
Is it a pageant the rich folks play?

'T is the King of England from over sea,  
Who has come unto visit our fair countrie.

But why does the curfew toll sae low?  
And why do the mourners walk a-row?

O 't is Hugh of Amiens my sister's son  
Who is lying stark, for his day is done.

Nay, nay, for I see white lilies clear,  
It is no strong man who lies on the bier.

O 't is old Dame Jeannette that kept the hall,  
I knew she would die at the autumn fall.

Dame Jeannette had not that gold-brown hair,  
Old Jeannette was not a maiden fair.

O 't is none of our kith and none of our kin,  
(Her soul may our Lady assoil from sin !)

But I hear the boy's voice chaunting sweet,  
' Elle est morte, la Marguerite.'

Come in, my son, and lie on the bed,  
And let the dead folk bury their dead.

O mother, you know I loved her true :  
O mother, hath one grave room for two ?

THE DOLE OF THE KING'S  
DAUGHTER

(BRETON)

**S**EVEN stars in the still water,  
And seven in the sky;  
Seven sins on the King's daughter,  
Deep in her soul to lie.

Red roses are at her feet,  
(Roses are red in her red-gold hair)  
And O where her bosom and girdle meet  
Red roses are hidden there.

Fair is the knight who lieth slain  
Amid the rush and reed,  
See the lean fishes that are fain  
Upon dead men to feed.

Sweet is the page that lieth there,  
(Cloth of gold is goodly prey,)  
See the black ravens in the air,  
Black, O black as the night are they.



What do they there so stark and dead?  
    (There is blood upon her hand)  
Why are the lilies flecked with red?  
    (There is blood on the river sand.)

There are two that ride from the south and  
    east,  
And two from the north and west,  
For the black raven a goodly feast,  
For the King's daughter rest.

There is one man who loves her true,  
    (Red, O red, is the stain of gore!)  
He hath duggen a grave by the darksome  
    yew,  
    (One grave will do for four.)

No moon in the still heaven,  
    In the black water none,  
The sins on her soul are seven,  
    The sin upon his is one.

## AMOR INTELLECTUALIS

○ FT have we trod the vales of Castaly  
And heard sweet notes of sylvan music  
blown

From antique reeds to common folk unknown :  
And often launched our bark upon that sea  
Which the nine Muses hold in empery,  
And ploughed free furrows through the wave  
and foam,

Nor spread reluctant sail for more safe home  
Till we had freighted well our argosy.  
Of which despoiled treasures these remain,  
Sordello's passion, and the honeyed line  
Of young Endymion, lordly Tamburlaine  
Driving his pampered jades, and, more than  
these,

The seven-fold vision of the Florentine,  
And grave-browed Milton's solemn harmonies.

## SANTA DECCA

THE Gods are dead : no longer do we bring  
To grey-eyed Pallas crowns of olive-  
leaves !

Demeter's child no more hath tithe of sheaves,  
And in the noon the careless shepherds sing,  
For Pan is dead, and all the wantoning

By secret glade and devious haunt is o'er :  
Young Hylas seeks the water-springs no more ;  
Great Pan is dead, and Mary's son is King.

And yet—perchance in this sea-trancèd isle,  
Chewing the bitter fruit of memory,  
Some God lies hidden in the asphodel.  
Ah Love! if such there be, then it were well  
For us to fly his anger : nay, but see,  
The leaves are stirring : let us watch awhile.

CORFU.

## A VISION

TWO crownèd Kings, and One that stood  
alone

With no green weight of laurels round his  
head,

But with sad eyes as one uncomforted,  
And wearied with man's never-ceasing moan  
For sins no bleating victim can atone,

And sweet long lips with tears and kisses fed.

Girt was he in a garment black and red,  
And at his feet I marked a broken stone

Which sent up lilies, dove-like, to his knees.  
Now at their sight, my heart being lit with flame,  
I cried to Beatricé, 'Who are these?'

And she made answer, knowing well each name,  
'Æschylos first, the second Sophokles,  
And last (wide stream of tears !) Euripides.'

## IMPRESSION DE VOYAGE

**T**HE sea was sapphire coloured, and the sky  
Burned like a heated opal through the  
air;

We hoisted sail; the wind was blowing fair  
For the blue lands that to the eastward lie.  
From the steep prow I marked with quickening  
eye

Zakynthos, every olive grove and creek,  
Ithaca's cliff, Lycaon's snowy peak,  
And all the flower-strewn hills of Arcady.  
The flapping of the sail against the mast,  
The ripple of the water on the side,  
The ripple of girls' laughter at the stern,  
The only sounds :—when 'gan the West to burn,  
And a red sun upon the seas to ride,  
I stood upon the soil of Greece at last!

KATAKOLO.

## THE GRAVE OF SHELLEY

**L**IKE burnt-out torches by a sick man's bed  
Gaunt cypress-trees stand round the sun-  
bleached stone ;

Here doth the little night-owl make her  
throne,  
And the slight lizard show his jewelled head.  
And, where the chaliced poppies flame to red,  
In the still chamber of yon pyramid  
Surely some Old-World Sphinx lurks darkly  
hid,  
Grim warder of this pleasaunce of the dead.

Ah ! sweet indeed to rest within the womb  
Of Earth, great mother of eternal sleep,  
But sweeter far for thee a restless tomb  
In the blue cavern of an echoing deep,  
Or where the tall ships founder in the gloom  
Against the rocks of some wave-shattered  
steep.

ROME.

## BY THE ARNO

THE oleander on the wall  
Grows crimson in the dawning light,  
Though the grey shadows of the night  
Lie yet on Florence like a pall.

The dew is bright upon the hill,  
And bright the blossoms overhead,  
But ah! the grasshoppers have fled,  
The little Attic song is still.

Only the leaves are gently stirred  
By the soft breathing of the gale,  
And in the almond-scented vale  
The lonely nightingale is heard.

The day will make thee silent soon,  
O nightingale sing on for love!  
While yet upon the shadowy grove  
Splinter the arrows of the moon.

Before across the silent lawn  
In sea-green vest the morning steals,  
And to love's frightened eyes reveals  
The long white fingers of the dawn

Fast climbing up the eastern sky  
To grasp and slay the shuddering night,  
All careless of my heart's delight,  
Or if the nightingale should die.





## **IMPRESSIONS DE THÉÂTRE**



## FABIEN DEI FRANCHI

TO MY FRIEND HENRY IRVING

**T**HE silent room, the heavy creeping shade,  
The dead that travel fast, the opening  
door,

The murdered brother rising through the floor,  
The ghost's white fingers on thy shoulders laid,  
And then the lonely duel in the glade,

The broken swords, the stifled scream, the  
gore,

Thy grand revengeful eyes when all is o'er,—  
These things are well enough,—but thou wert  
made

For more august creation ! frenzied Lear  
Should at thy bidding wander on the heath  
With the shrill fool to mock him, Romeo  
For thee should lure his love, and desperate fear  
Pluck Richard's recreant dagger from its sheath—  
Thou trumpet set for Shakespeare's lips to  
blow !

## PHÈDRE

TO SARAH BERNHARDT

HOW vain and dull this common world must  
seem

To such a One as thou, who should'st have  
talked

At Florence with Mirandola, or walked  
Through the cool olives of the Academe :  
Thou should'st have gathered reeds from a green  
stream

For Goat-foot Pan's shrill piping, and have  
played

With the white girls in that Phæacian glade  
Where grave Odysseus wakened from his dream.

Ah ! surely once some urn of Attic clay  
Held thy wan dust, and thou hast come again  
Back to this common world so dull and vain,  
For thou wert weary of the sunless day,  
The heavy fields of scentless asphodel,  
The loveless lips with which men kiss in Hell

WRITTEN AT THE LYCEUM  
THEATRE

## I

## PORTIA

TO ELLEN TERRY

**I** MARVEL not Bassanio was so bold  
To peril all he had upon the lead,  
Or that proud Aragon bent low his head  
Or that Morocco's fiery heart grew cold :  
For in that gorgeous dress of beaten gold  
Which is more golden than the golden sun  
No woman Veronesé looked upon  
Was half so fair as thou whom I behold.  
Yet fairer when with wisdom as your shield  
The sober-suited lawyer's gown you donned,  
And would not let the laws of Venice yield  
Antonio's heart to that accursèd Jew—  
O Portia! take my heart : it is thy due :  
I think I will not quarrel with the Bond.

## II

## QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA

TO ELLEN TERRY

I N the lone tent, waiting for victory,  
She stands with eyes marred by the mists  
of pain,

Like some wan lily overdrenched with rain :  
The clamorous clang of arms, the ensanguined  
sky,

War's ruin, and the wreck of chivalry

To her proud soul no common fear can bring :

Bravely she tarrieth for her Lord the King,

Her soul a-flame with passionate ecstasy.

O Hair of Gold ! O Crimson Lips ! O Face

Made for the luring and the love of man !

With thee I do forget the toil and stress,

The loveless road that knows no resting place,

Time's straitened pulse, the soul's dread  
weariness,

My freedom, and my life republican !

## III

## CAMMA

TO ELLEN TERRY

AS one who poring on a Grecian urn  
Scans the fair shapes some Attic hand  
hath made,

God with slim goddess, goodly man with  
maid,

And for their beauty's sake is loth to turn  
And face the obvious day, must I not yearn

For many a secret moon of indolent bliss,

When in the midmost shrine of Artemis

I see thee standing, antique-limbed, and stern?

And yet—methinks I'd rather see thee play

That serpent of old Nile, whose witchery

Made Emperors drunken,—come, great Egypt,  
shake

Our stage with all thy mimic pageants! Nay,

I am grown sick of unreal passions, make

The world thine Actium, me thine Anthony!





**PANTHEA**



## PANTHEA

**N**AY, let us walk from fire unto fire,  
From passionate pain to deadlier de-  
light,—

I am too young to live without desire,  
Too young art thou to waste this summer  
night

Asking those idle questions which of old  
Man sought of seer and oracle, and no reply was  
told.

For, sweet, to feel is better than to know,  
And wisdom is a childless heritage,  
One pulse of passion—youth's first fiery glow,—  
Are worth the hoarded proverbs of the sage :  
Vex not thy soul with dead philosophy,  
Have we not lips to kiss with, hearts to love and  
eyes to see !

Dost thou not hear the murmuring nightingale,  
Like water bubbling from a silver jar,  
So soft she sings the envious moon is pale,  
That high in heaven she is hung so far

She cannot hear that love-enraptured tune,—  
Mark how she wreathes each horn with mist,  
yon late and labouring moon.

White lilies, in whose cups the gold bees dream,  
The fallen snow of petals where the breeze  
Scatters the chestnut blossom, or the gleam  
Of boyish limbs in water,—are not these  
Enough for thee, dost thou desire more?  
Alas! the Gods will give nought else from their  
eternal store.

For our high Gods have sick and wearied grown  
Of all our endless sins, our vain endeavour  
For wasted days of youth to make atone  
By pain or prayer or priest, and never, never,  
Hearken they now to either good or ill,  
But send their rain upon the just and the unjust  
at will.

They sit at ease, our Gods they sit at ease,  
Strewing with leaves of rose their scented  
wine,  
They sleep, they sleep, beneath the rocking  
trees  
Where asphodel and yellow lotus twine,  
Mourning the old glad days before they knew  
What evil things the heart of man could dream,  
and dreaming do.

And far beneath the brazen floor they see  
Like swarming flies the crowd of little men,  
The bustle of small lives, then wearily  
Back to their lotus-haunts they turn again  
Kissing each others' mouths, and mix more  
deep  
The poppy-seeded draught which brings soft  
purple-lidded sleep.

There all day long the golden-vestured sun,  
Their torch-bearer, stands with his torch  
ablaze,  
And, when the gaudy web of noon is spun  
By its twelve maidens, through the crimson  
haze  
Fresh from Endymion's arms comes forth the  
moon,  
And the immortal Gods in toils of mortal passions  
swoon.

There walks Queen Juno through some dewy  
mead,  
Her grand white feet flecked with the saffron  
dust  
Of wind-stirred lilies, while young Ganymede  
Leaps in the hot and amber-foaming must,  
His curls all tossed, as when the eagle bare  
The frightened boy from Ida through the blue  
Ionian air.

There in the green heart of some garden close  
Queen Venus with the shepherd at her side,  
Her warm soft body like the briar rose  
Which would be white yet blushes at its  
pride,  
Laughs low for love, till jealous Salmacis  
Peers through the myrtle-leaves and sighs for  
pain of lonely bliss.

There never does that dreary north-wind blow  
Which leaves our English forests bleak and  
bare,  
Nor ever falls the swift white-feathered snow,  
Nor ever doth the red-toothed lightning dare  
To wake them in the silver-fretted night  
When we lie weeping for some sweet sad sin,  
some dead delight.

Alas! they know the far Lethæan spring,  
The violet-hidden waters well they know,  
Where one whose feet with tired wandering  
Are faint and broken may take heart and go,  
And from those dark depths cool and crystalline  
Drink, and draw balm, and sleep for sleepless  
souls, and anodyne.

But we oppress our natures, God or Fate  
Is our enemy, we starve and feed  
On vain repentance—O we are born too late!  
What balm for us in bruised poppy seed

Who crowd into one finite pulse of time  
The joy of infinite love and the fierce pain of  
infinite crime.

O we are wearied of this sense of guilt,  
Wearied of pleasure's paramour despair,  
Wearied of every temple we have built,  
Wearied of every right, unanswered prayer,  
For man is weak ; God sleeps : and heaven is  
high :  
One fiery-coloured moment : one great love ;  
and lo ! we die.

Ah ! but no ferry-man with labouring pole  
Nears his black shallop to the flowerless  
strand,  
No little coin of bronze can bring the soul  
Over Death's river to the sunless land,  
Victim and wine and vow are all in vain,  
The tomb is sealed ; the soldiers watch ; the  
dead rise not again.

We are resolved into the supreme air,  
We are made one with what we touch and see,  
With our heart's blood each crimson sun is fair,  
With our young lives each spring-impassioned  
tree  
Flames into green, the wildest beasts that range  
The moor our kinsmen are, all life is one, and all  
is change.



With beat of systole and of diastole

One grand great life throbs through earth's  
giant heart,

And mighty waves of single Being roll

From nerveless germ to man, for we are part  
Of every rock and bird and beast and hill,  
One with the things that prey on us, and one  
with what we kill.

From lower cells of waking life we pass

To full perfection ; thus the world grows old :  
We who are godlike now were once a mass

Of quivering purple flecked with bars of gold,  
Unsentient or of joy or misery,  
And tossed in terrible tangles of some wild and  
wind-swept sea.

This hot hard flame with which our bodies burn

Will make some meadow blaze with daffodil,  
Ay! and those argent breasts of thine will turn  
To water-lilies ; the brown fields men till  
Will be more fruitful for our love to-night,  
Nothing is lost in nature, all things live in  
Death's despite.

The boy's first kiss, the hyacinth's first bell,

The man's last passion, and the last red spear  
That from the lily leaps, the asphodel  
Which will not let its blossoms blow for fear

Of too much beauty, and the timid shame  
Of the young bridegroom at his lover's eyes,—  
these with the same

One sacrament are consecrate, the earth  
Not we alone hath passions hymeneal,  
The yellow buttercups that shake for mirth  
At daybreak know a pleasure not less real  
Than we do, when in some fresh-blossoming  
wood,  
We draw the spring into our hearts, and feel  
that life is good.

So when men bury us beneath the yew  
Thy crimson-stained mouth a rose will be,  
And thy soft eyes lush bluebells dimmed with  
dew,  
And when the white narcissus wantonly  
Kisses the wind its playmate some faint joy  
Will thrill our dust, and we will be again fond  
maid and boy.

And thus without life's conscious torturing pain  
In some sweet flower we will feel the sun,  
And from the linnet's throat will sing again,  
And as two gorgeous-mailed snakes will run  
Over our graves, or as two tigers creep  
Through the hot jungle where the yellow-eyed  
huge lions sleep

And give them battle ! How my heart leaps up  
To think of that grand living after death  
In beast and bird and flower, when this cup,  
Being filled too full of spirit, bursts for  
breath,  
And with the pale leaves of some autumn day  
The soul earth's earliest conqueror becomes  
earth's last great prey.

O think of it ! We shall inform ourselves  
Into all sensuous life, the goat-foot Faun,  
The Centaur, or the merry bright-eyed Elves  
That leave their dancing rings to spite the  
dawn  
Upon the meadows, shall not be more near  
Than you and I to nature's mysteries, for we  
shall hear

The thrush's heart beat, and the daisies grow,  
And the wan snowdrop sighing for the sun  
On sunless days in winter, we shall know  
By whom the silver gossamer is spun,  
Who paints the diapered fritillaries,  
On what wide wings from shivering pine to pine  
the eagle flies.

Ay ! had we never loved at all, who knows  
If yonder daffodil had lured the bee  
Into its gilded womb, or any rose  
Had hung with crimson lamps its little tree !

Methinks no leaf would ever bud in spring,  
But for the lovers' lips that kiss, the poets' lips  
that sing.

Is the light vanished from our golden sun,  
Or is this dædal-fashioned earth less fair,  
That we are nature's heritors, and one  
With every pulse of life that beats the air?  
Rather new suns across the sky shall pass,  
New splendour come unto the flower, new glory  
to the grass.

And we two lovers shall not sit afar,  
Critics of nature, but the joyous sea  
Shall be our raiment, and the bearded star  
Shoot arrows at our pleasure! We shall be  
Part of the mighty universal whole,  
And through all æons mix and mingle with the  
Kosmic Soul!

We shall be notes in that great Symphony  
Whose cadence circles through the rhythmic  
spheres,  
And all the live World's throbbing heart shall  
be  
One with our heart; the stealthy creeping  
years  
Have lost their terrors now, we shall not die,  
The Universe itself shall be our Immortality.



## **THE FOURTH MOVEMENT**



## IMPRESSION

### LE RÉVEILLON

THE sky is laced with fitful red,  
The circling mists and shadows flee,  
The dawn is rising from the sea,  
Like a white lady from her bed.

And jagged brazen arrows fall  
Athwart the feathers of the night,  
And a long wave of yellow light  
Breaks silently on tower and hall,

And spreading wide across the wold  
Wakes into flight some fluttering bird,  
And all the chestnut tops are stirred,  
And all the branches streaked with gold.



## AT VERONA

HOW steep the stairs within Kings' houses  
are

For exile-wearied feet as mine to tread,  
And O how salt and bitter is the bread  
Which falls from this Hound's table,—better far  
That I had died in the red ways of war,  
Or that the gate of Florence bare my head,  
Than to live thus, by all things comraded  
Which seek the essence of my soul to mar.

'Curse God and die: what better hope than  
this?

He hath forgotten thee in all the bliss  
Of his gold city, and eternal day'—  
Nay peace: behind my prison's blinded bars  
I do possess what none can take away  
My love, and all the glory of the stars.

## APOLOGIA

**I**S it thy will that I should wax and wane,  
Barter my cloth of gold for hoddén grey,  
And at thy pleasure weave that web of pain  
Whose brightest threads are each a wasted  
day?

Is it thy will—Love that I love so well—  
That my Soul's House should be a tortured  
spot  
Wherein, like evil paramours, must dwell  
The quenchless flame, the worm that dieth  
not?

Nay, if it be thy will I shall endure,  
And sell ambition at the common mart,  
And let dull failure be my vestiture,  
And sorrow dig its grave within my heart.

Perchance it may be better so—at least  
I have not made my heart a heart of stone,  
Nor starved my boyhood of its goodly feast,  
Nor walked where Beauty is a thing unknown.

Many a man hath done so ; sought to fence  
In straitened bonds the soul that should be  
free,

Trodden the dusty road of common sense,  
While all the forest sang of liberty,

Not marking how the spotted hawk in flight  
Passed on wide pinion through the lofty air,  
To where some steep untrodden mountain height  
Caught the last tresses of the Sun God's hair.

Or now the little flower he trod upon,  
The daisy, that white-feathered shield of gold,  
Followed with wistful eyes the wandering sun  
Content if once its leaves were aureoled.

But surely it is something to have been  
The best beloved for a little while,  
To have walked hand in hand with Love, and  
seen  
His purple wings flit once across thy smile.

Ay ! though the gorgèd asp of passion feed  
On my boy's heart, yet have I burst the bars,  
Stood face to face with Beauty, known indeed  
The Love which moves the Sun and all the  
stars !

## QUIA MULTUM AMAVI

**D**EAR Heart, I think the young impassioned  
priest

When first he takes from out the hidden  
shrine

His God imprisoned in the Eucharist,  
And eats the bread, and drinks the dreadful  
wine,

Feels not such awful wonder as I felt

When first my smitten eyes beat full on thee,  
And all night long before thy feet I knelt  
Till thou wert wearied of Idolatry.

Ah! hadst thou liked me less and loved me  
more,

Through all those summer days of joy and  
rain,

I had not now been sorrow's heritor,  
Or stood a lackey in the House of Pain.

Yet, though remorse, youth's white-faced sene-  
schal,

Tread on my heels with all his retinue,  
I am most glad I loved thee—think of all  
The suns that go to make one speedwell blue!

## SILENTIUM AMORIS

**A**S often-times the too resplendent sun  
Hurries the pallid and reluctant moon  
Back to her sombre cave, ere she hath won  
A single ballad from the nightingale,  
So doth thy Beauty make my lips to fail,  
And all my sweetest singing out of tune.

And as at dawn across the level mead  
On wings impetuous some wind will come,  
And with its too harsh kisses break the reed  
Which was its only instrument of song,  
So my too stormy passions work me wrong,  
And for excess of Love my Love is dumb.

But surely unto Thee mine eyes did show  
Why I am silent, and my lute unstrung ;  
Else it were better we should part, and go,  
Thou to some lips of sweeter melody,  
And I to nurse the barren memory  
Of unkind kisses, and songs never sung.

## HER VOICE

THE wild bee reels from bough to bough  
With his furry coat and his gauzy wing,  
Now in a lily-cup, and now  
Setting a jacinth bell a-swing,  
In his wandering ;  
Sit closer love : it was here I trow  
I made that vow,

Swore that two lives should be like one  
As long as the sea-gull loved the sea,  
As long as the sunflower sought the sun,—  
It shall be, I said, for eternity  
'Twixt you and me !  
Dear friend, those times are over and done ;  
Love's web is spun.

Look upward where the poplar trees  
Sway and sway in the summer air,  
Here in the valley never a breeze  
Scatters the thistledown, but there  
Great winds blow fair  
From the mighty murmuring mystical seas,  
And the wave-lashed leas.

Look upward where the white gull screams,  
What does it see that we do not see?  
Is that a star? or the lamp that gleams  
On some outward voyaging argosy,—  
Ah! can it be  
We have lived our lives in a land of dreams!  
How sad it seems.

Sweet, there is nothing left to say  
But this, that love is never lost,  
Keen winter stabs the breasts of May  
Whose crimson roses burst his frost,  
Ships tempest-tossed  
Will find a harbour in some bay,  
And so we may.

And there is nothing left to do  
But to kiss once again, and part,  
Nay, there is nothing we should rue,  
I have my beauty,—you your Art,  
Nay, do not start,  
One world was not enough for two  
Like me and you.

## MY VOICE

WITHIN this restless, hurried, modern  
world

We took our hearts' full pleasure—You and I,  
And now the white sails of our ship are furled,  
And spent the lading of our argosy.

Wherefore my cheeks before their time are wan,  
For very weeping is my gladness fled,  
Sorrow has paled my young mouth's vermilion,  
And Ruin draws the curtains of my bed.

But all this crowded life has been to thee  
No more than lyre, or lute, or subtle spell  
Of viols, or the music of the sea  
That sleeps, a mimic echo, in the shell.



## TÆDIUM VITÆ

**T**O stab my youth with desperate knives, to  
wear

This paltry age's gaudy livery,  
To let each base hand filch my treasury,  
To mesh my soul within a woman's hair,  
And be mere Fortune's lackeyed groom,—I  
swear

I love it not ! these things are less to me  
Than the thin foam that frets upon the sea,  
Less than the thistledown of summer air  
Which hath no seed : better to stand aloof  
Far from these slanderous fools who mock my  
life

Knowing me not, better the lowliest roof  
Fit for the meanest hind to sojourn in,  
Than to go back to that hoarse cave of strife  
Where my white soul first kissed the mouth of  
sin.

**HUMANITAD**



## HUMANITAD

**I**T is full winter now : the trees are bare,  
Save where the cattle huddle from the cold  
Beneath the pine, for it doth never wear  
The Autumn's gaudy livery whose gold  
Her jealous brother pilfers, but is true  
To the green doublet ; bitter is the wind, as  
though it blew

From Saturn's cave ; a few thin wisps of hay  
Lie on the sharp black hedges, where the wain  
Dragged the sweet pillage of a summer's day  
From the low meadows up the narrow lane ;  
Upon the half-thawed snow the bleating sheep  
Press close against the hurdles, and the shivering  
house-dogs creep

From the shut stable to the frozen stream  
And back again disconsolate, and miss  
The bawling shepherds and the noisy team ;  
And overhead in circling listlessness  
The cawing rooks whirl round the frosted stack,  
Or crowd the dripping boughs ; and in the fen  
the ice-pools crack

Where the gaunt bittern stalks among the reeds  
And flaps his wings, and stretches back his  
neck,  
And hoots to see the moon ; across the meads  
Limps the poor frightened hare, a little speck ;  
And a stray seamew with its fretful cry  
Flits like a sudden drift of snow against the dull  
grey sky.

Full winter : and the lusty goodman brings  
His load of faggots from the chilly byre,  
And stamps his feet upon the hearth, and flings  
The sappy billets on the waning fire,  
And laughs to see the sudden lightening scare  
His children at their play ; and yet,—the Spring  
is in the air,

Already the slim crocus stirs the snow,  
And soon yon blanchèd fields will bloom  
again  
With nodding cowslips for some lad to mow,  
For with the first warm kisses of the rain  
The winter's icy sorrow breaks to tears,  
And the brown thrushes mate, and with bright  
eyes the rabbit peers

From the dark warren where the fir-cones lie,  
And treads one snowdrop under foot, and  
runs

Over the mossy knoll, and blackbirds fly  
Across our path at evening, and the suns  
Stay longer with us ; ah ! how good to see  
Grass-girdled Spring in all her joy of laughing  
greenery

Dance through the hedges till the early rose,  
(That sweet repentance of the thorny briar !)  
Burst from its sheathèd emerald and disclose  
The little quivering disk of golden fire  
Which the bees know so well, for with it  
come  
Pale boy's-love, sops-in-wine, and daffadillies all  
in bloom.

Then up and down the field the sower goes,  
While close behind the laughing younker  
scares  
With shrilly whoop the black and thievish  
crows,  
And then the chestnut-tree its glory wears,  
And on the grass the creamy blossom falls  
In odorous excess, and faint half-whispered  
madrigals

Steal from the bluebells' nodding carillons  
Each breezy morn, and then white jessamine,  
That star of its own heaven, snap-dragons  
With lolling crimson tongues, and eglantine

In dusty velvets clad usurp the bed  
And woodland empery, and when the lingering  
    rose hath shed

Red leaf by leaf its folded panoply,  
    And pansies closed their purple lidded eyes,  
Chrysanthemums from gilded argosy  
    Unload their gaudy scentless merchandise,  
And violets getting overbold withdraw  
From their shy nooks, and scarlet berries dot  
    the leafless haw.

O happy field ! and O thrice happy tree !  
    Soon will your Queen in daisy-flowered  
    smock

And crown of flower-de-luce trip down the  
    lea,

Soon will the lazy shepherds drive their flock  
Back to the pasture by the pool, and soon  
Through the green leaves will float the hum of  
    murmuring bees at noon.

Soon will the glade be bright with bellamour,  
    The flower which wantons love, and those  
    sweet nuns

Vale-lilies in their snowy vestiture

Will tell their beaded pearls, and carnations  
With mitred dusky leaves will scent the wind,  
And straggling traveller's-joy each hedge with  
    yellow stars will bind.

Dear Bride of Nature and most bounteous  
Spring!

That canst give increase to the sweet-breath'd  
kine,  
And to the kid its little horns, and bring  
The soft and silky blossoms to the vine,  
Where is that old nepenthe which of yore  
Man got from poppy root and glossy-berried  
mandragore!

There was a time when any common bird  
Could make me sing in unison, a time  
When all the strings of boyish life were stirred  
To quick response or more melodious rhyme  
By every forest idyll;—do I change?  
Or rather doth some evil thing through thy fair  
pleasaunce range?

Nay, nay, thou art the same: 't is I who seek  
To vex with sighs thy simple solitude,  
And because fruitless tears bedew my cheek  
Would have thee weep with me in brother-  
hood;  
Fool! shall each wronged and restless spirit dare  
To taint such wine with the salt poison of his  
own despair!

'Thou art the same: 't is I whose wretched soul  
Takes discontent to be its paramour,  
And gives its kingdom to the rude control



Of what should be its servitor,—for sure  
Wisdom is somewhere, though the stormy sea  
Contain it not, and the huge deep answer ‘‘T is  
not in me.’

To burn with one clear flame, to stand erect  
In natural honour, not to bend the knee  
In profitless prostrations whose effect  
Is by itself condemned, what alchemy  
Can teach me this? what herb Medea brewed  
Will bring the unexultant peace of essence not  
subdued?

The minor chord which ends the harmony,  
And for its answering brother waits in vain  
Sobbing for incompleted melody,  
Dies a Swan’s death; but I the heir of pain,  
A silent Memnon with blank lidless eyes,  
Wait for the light and music of those suns which  
never rise.

The quenched-out torch, the lonely cypress-  
gloom,  
The little dust stored in the narrow urn,  
The gentle XAIPE of the Attic tomb,—  
Were not these better far than to return  
To my old fitful restless malady,  
Or spend my days within the voiceless cave of  
misery?

Nay! for perchance that poppy-crownèd God  
Is like the watcher by a sick man's bed  
Who talks of sleep but gives it not; his rod  
Hath lost its virtue, and, when all is said,  
Death is too rude, too obvious a key  
To solve one single secret in a life's philosophy.

And Love! that noble madness, whose august  
And inextinguishable might can slay  
The soul with honeyed drugs,—alas! I must  
From such sweet ruin play the runaway,  
Although too constant memory never can  
Forget the archèd splendour of those brows  
Olympian

Which for a little season made my youth  
So soft a swoon of exquisite indolence  
That all the chiding of more prudent Truth  
Seemed the thin voice of jealousy,—O Hence  
Thou huntress deadlier than Artemis!  
Go seek some other quarry! for of thy too  
perilous bliss

My lips have drunk enough,—no more, no  
more,—  
Though Love himself should turn his gilded  
prow  
Back to the troubled waters of this shore  
Where I am wrecked and stranded, even now

The chariot wheels of passion sweep too near,  
Hence! Hence! I pass unto a life more barren,  
more austere.

More barren—ay, those arms will never lean  
Down through the trellised vines and draw  
my soul  
In sweet reluctance through the tangled green;  
Some other head must wear that aureole,  
For I am Hers who loves not any man  
Whose white and stainless bosom bears the sign  
Gorgonian.

Let Venus go and chuck her dainty page,  
And kiss his mouth, and toss his curly hair,  
With net and spear and hunting equipage  
Let young Adonis to his tryst repair,  
But me her fond and subtle-fashioned spell  
Delights no more, though I could win her  
dearest citadel.

Ay, though I were that laughing shepherd boy  
Who from Mount Ida saw the little cloud  
Pass over Tenedos and lofty Troy  
And knew the coming of the Queen, and  
bowed  
In wonder at her feet, not for the sake  
Of a new Helen would I bid her hand the apple  
take.

Then rise supreme Athena argent-limbed !

And, if my lips be music-less, inspire  
At least my life : was not thy glory hymned

By One who gave to thee his sword and lyre  
Like Æschylos at well-fought Marathon,  
And died to show that Milton's England still  
could bear a son !

And yet I cannot tread the Portico

And live without desire, fear and pain,  
Or nurture that wise calm which long ago

The grave Athenian master taught to men,  
Self-poised, self-centred, and self-comforted,  
To watch the world's vain phantasies go by with  
un-bowed head.

Alas ! that serene brow, those eloquent lips,

Those eyes that mirrored all eternity,  
Rest in their own Colonos, an eclipse

Hath come on Wisdom, and Mnemosyne  
Is childless ; in the night which she had made  
For lofty secure flight Athena's owl itself hath  
strayed.

Nor much with Science do I care to climb,

Although by strange and subtle witchery  
She draw the moon from heaven : the Muse  
Time

Unrolls her gorgeous-coloured tapestry

To no less eager eyes ; often indeed  
In the great epic of Polymnia's scroll I love to  
read

How Asia sent her myriad hosts to war  
Against a little town, and panoplied  
In gilded mail with jewelled scimitar,  
White-shielded, purple-crested, rode the Mede  
Between the waving poplars and the sea  
Which men call Artemisium, till he saw Ther-  
mopylæ

Its steep ravine spanned by a narrow wall,  
And on the nearer side a little brood  
Of careless lions holding festival !  
And stood amazed at such hardihood,  
And pitched his tent upon the reedy shore,  
And stayed two days to wonder, and then crept  
at midnight o'er

Some unfrequented height, and coming down  
The autumn forests treacherously slew  
What Sparta held most dear and was the  
crown

Of far Eurotas, and passed on, nor knew  
How God had staked an evil net for him  
In the small bay at Salamis,—and yet, the page  
grows dim,

Its cadenced Greek delights me not, I feel  
With such a goodly time too out of tune  
To love it much : for like the Dial's wheel  
That from its blinded darkness strikes the  
noon

Yet never sees the sun, so do my eyes  
Restlessly follow that which from my cheated  
vision flies.

O for one grand unselfish simple life  
To teach us what is Wisdom ! speak ye  
hills  
Of lone Helvellyn, for this note of strife  
Shunned your untroubled crags and crystal  
rills,  
Where is that Spirit which living blamelessly  
Yet dared to kiss the smitten mouth of his own  
century !

Speak ye Rydalian laurels ! where is He  
Whose gentle head ye sheltered, that pure  
soul  
Whose gracious days of uncrowned majesty  
Through lowliest conduct touched the lofty  
goal  
Where Love and Duty mingle ! Him at least  
The most high Laws were glad of, He had sat  
at Wisdom's feast,

But we are Learning's changelings, know by rote  
The clarion watchword of each Grecian school  
And follow none, the flawless sword which  
smote

The pagan Hydra is an effete tool  
Which we ourselves have blunted, what man  
now

Shall scale the august ancient heights and to  
old Reverence bow?

One such indeed I saw, but, Ichabod!

Gone is that last dear son of Italy,  
Who being man died for the sake of God,  
And whose un-risen bones sleep peacefully,  
O guard him, guard him well, my Giotto's  
tower,  
Thou marble lily of the lily town! let not the  
lour

Of the rude tempest vex his slumber, or  
The Arno with its tawny troubled gold  
O'er-leap its marge, no mightier conqueror  
Clomb the high Capitol in the days of old  
When Rome was indeed Rome, for Liberty  
Walked like a Bride beside him, at which sight  
pale Mystery

Fled shrieking to her farthest sombrest cell  
With an old man who grabbed rusty keys,  
Fled shuddering, for that immemorial knell

With which oblivion buries dynasties  
Swept like a wounded eagle on the blast,  
As to the holy heart of Rome the great triumvir  
passed.

He knew the holiest heart and heights of Rome,  
He drave the base wolf from the lion's lair,  
And now lies dead by that empyreal dome  
Which overtops Valdarno hung in air  
By Brunelleschi—O Melpomene  
Breathe through thy melancholy pipe thy  
sweetest threnody !

Breathe through the tragic stops such melodies  
That Joy's self may grow jealous, and the Nine  
Forget awhile their discreet emperies,  
Mourning for him who on Rome's lordliest  
shrine  
Lit for men's lives the light of Marathon,  
And bare to sun-forgotten fields the fire of the  
sun !

O guard him, guard him well, my Giotto's  
tower,  
Let some young Florentine each eventide  
Bring coronals of that enchanted flower  
Which the dim woods of Vallombrosa hide,  
And deck the marble tomb wherein he lies  
Whose soul is as some mighty orb unseen of  
mortal eyes.



Some mighty orb whose cycled wanderings,  
Being tempest-driven to the farthest rim  
Where Chaos meets Creation and the wings  
Of the eternal chanting Cherubim  
Are pavilioned on Nothing, passed away  
Into a moonless void,—and yet, though he is  
dust and clay,

He is not dead, the immemorial Fates  
Forbid it, and the closing shears refrain,  
Lift up your heads ye everlasting gates!  
Ye argent clarions, sound a loftier strain!  
For the vile thing he hated lurks within  
Its sombre house, alone with God and memories  
of sin.

Still what avails it that she sought her cave  
That murderous mother of red harlotries?  
At Munich on the marble architrave  
The Grecian boys die smiling, but the seas  
Which wash Ægina fret in loneliness  
Not mirroring their beauty, so our lives grow  
colourless

For lack of our ideals, if one star  
Flame torch-like in the heavens the unjust  
Swift daylight kills it, and no trump of war  
Can wake to passionate voice the silent dust

Which was Mazzini once ! rich Niobe  
For all her stony sorrows hath her sons, but  
Italy !

What Easter Day shall make her children rise,  
Who were not Gods yet suffered ? what sure  
feet  
Shall find their grave-clothes folded ? what clear  
eyes  
Shall see them bodily ? O it were meet  
To roll the stone from off the sepulchre  
And kiss the bleeding roses of their wounds, in  
love of Her

Our Italy ! our mother visible !  
Most blessed among nations and most sad,  
For whose dear sake the young Calabrian fell  
That day at Aspromonte and was glad  
That in an age when God was bought and sold  
One man could die for Liberty ! but we, burnt  
out and cold,

See Honour smitten on the cheek and gyves  
Bind the sweet feet of Mercy: Poverty  
Creeps through our sunless lanes and with sharp  
knives  
Cuts the warm throats of children stealthily,  
And no word said :—O we are wretched men  
Unworthy of our great inheritance ! where is  
the pen

Of austere Milton? where the mighty sword  
Which slew its master righteously? the  
years  
Have lost their ancient leader, and no word  
Breaks from the voiceless tripod on our  
ears :  
While as a ruined mother in some spasm  
Bears a base child and loathes it, so our best  
enthusiasm

Genders unlawful children, Anarchy  
Freedom's own Judas, the vile prodigal  
Licence who steals the gold of Liberty  
And yet has nothing, Ignorance the real  
One Fratricide since Cain, Envy the asp  
That stings itself to anguish, Avarice whose  
palsied grasp

Is in its extent stiffened, moneyed Greed  
For whose dull appetite men waste away  
Amid the whirr of wheels and are the seed  
Of things which slay their sower, these each  
day  
Sees rife in England, and the gentle feet  
Of Beauty tread no more the stones of each  
unlovely street.

What even Cromwell spared is desecrated  
By weed and worm, left to the stormy play  
Of wind and beating snow, or renovated

By more destructful hands: Time's worst  
decay  
Will wreath its ruins with some loveliness,  
But these new Vandals can but make a rain-  
proof barrenness.

Where is that Art which bade the Angels sing  
Through Lincoln's lofty choir, till the air  
Seems from such marble harmonies to ring  
With sweeter song than common lips can dare  
To draw from actual reed? ah! where is now  
The cunning hand which made the flowering  
hawthorn branches bow

For Southwell's arch, and carved the House of  
One  
Who loved the lilies of the field with all  
Our dearest English flowers? the same sun  
Rises for us: the seasons natural  
Weave the same tapestry of green and grey:  
The unchanged hills are with us: but that Spirit  
hath passed away.

And yet perchance it may be better so,  
For Tyranny is an incestuous Queen,  
Murder her brother is her bedfellow,  
And the Plague chambers with her: in  
obscene  
And bloody paths her treacherous feet are set;  
Better the empty desert and a soul inviolate!

For gentle brotherhood, the harmony  
Of living in the healthful air, the swift  
Clean beauty of strong limbs when men are free  
And women chaste, these are the things  
which lift  
Our souls up more than even Agnolo's  
Gaunt blinded Sibyl poring o'er the scroll of  
human woes,

Or Titian's little maiden on the stair  
White as her own sweet lily and as tall,  
Or Mona Lisa smiling through her hair,—  
Ah ! somehow life is bigger after all  
Than any painted Angel, could we see  
The God that is within us ! The old Greek  
serenity

Which curbs the passion of that level line  
Of marble youths, who with untroubled eyes  
And chastened limbs ride round Athena's shrine  
And mirror her divine economies,  
And balanced symmetry of what in man  
Would else wage ceaseless warfare,—this at  
least within the span

Between our mother's kisses and the grave  
Might so inform our lives, that we could win  
Such mighty empires that from her cave  
Temptation would grow hoarse, and pallid Sin

Would walk ashamed of his adulteries,  
And Passion creep from out the House of Lust  
with startled eyes.

To make the Body and the Spirit one  
With all right things, till no thing live in  
vain

From morn to noon, but in sweet unison  
With every pulse of flesh and throb of brain  
The Soul in flawless essence high enthroned,  
Against all outer vain attack invincibly bas-  
tioned,

Mark with serene impartiality  
The strife of things, and yet be comforted,  
Knowing that by the chain causality  
All separate existences are wed  
Into one supreme whole, whose utterance  
Is joy, or holier praise! ah! surely this were  
governance

Of Life in most august omnipresence,  
Through which the rational intellect would  
find  
In passion its expression, and mere sense,  
Ignoble else, lend fire to the mind,  
And being joined with it in harmony  
More mystical than that which binds the stars  
planetary,

Strike from their several tones one octave chord  
Whose cadence being measureless would fly  
Through all the circling spheres, then to its  
Lord

Return refreshed with its new empery  
And more exultant power,—this indeed  
Could we but reach it were to find the last, the  
perfect creed.

Ah ! it was easy when the world was young  
To keep one's life free and inviolate,  
From our sad lips another song is rung,  
By our own hands our heads are desecrate,  
Wanderers in drear exile, and dispossessed  
Of what should be our own, we can but feed on  
wild unrest.

Somehow the grace, the bloom of things has  
flown,

And of all men we are most wretched who  
Must live each other's lives and not our own  
For very pity's sake and then undo  
All that we lived for—it was otherwise  
When soul and body seemed to blend in mystic  
symphonies.

But we have left those gentle haunts to pass  
With weary feet to the new Calvary,  
Where we behold, as one who in a glass

Sees his own face, self-slain Humanity,  
And in the dumb reproach of that sad gaze  
Learn what an awful phantom the red hand of  
man can raise.

O smitten mouth! O forehead crowned with  
thorn!

O chalice of all common miseries!  
Thou for our sakes that loved thee not hast  
borne

An agony of endless centuries,  
And we were vain and ignorant nor knew  
That when we stabbed thy heart it was our own  
real hearts we slew.

Being ourselves the sowers and the seeds,  
The night that covers and the lights that  
fade,

The spear that pierces and the side that bleeds,  
The lips betraying and the life betrayed;  
The deep hath calm: the moon hath rest: but  
we

Lords of the natural world are yet our own  
dread enemy.

Is this the end of all that primal force  
Which, in its changes being still the same,  
From eyeless Chaos cleft its upward course,



Through ravenous seas and whirling rocks  
and flame,  
Till the suns met in heaven and began  
Their cycles, and the morning stars sang, and  
the Word was Man !

Nay, nay, we are but crucified, and though  
The bloody sweat falls from our brows like  
rain,  
Loosen the nails—we shall come down I know,  
Staunch the red wounds—we shall be whole  
again,  
No need have we of hyssop-laden rod,  
That which is purely human, that is Godlike,  
that is God.

**FLOWER OF LOVE**



## ΓΑΤΚΤΗΙΚΡΟΣ ΕΡΩΣ

**S**WEET, I blame you not, for mine the fault  
was, had I not been made of common  
clay

I had climbed the higher heights unclimbed  
yet, seen the fuller air, the larger day.

From the wildness of my wasted passion I had  
struck a better, clearer song,  
Lit some lighter light of freer freedom, battled  
with some Hydra-headed wrong.

Had my lips been smitten into music by the  
kisses that but made them bleed,  
You had walked with Bice and the angels on  
that verdant and enamelled mead.

I had trod the road which Dante treading saw  
the suns of seven circles shine,  
Ay! perchance had seen the heavens opening,  
as they opened to the Florentine.

And the mighty nations would have crowned  
me, who am crownless now and without  
name,

And some orient dawn had found me kneeling  
on the threshold of the House of Fame.

I had sat within that marble circle where the  
oldest bard is as the young,  
And the pipe is ever dropping honey, and the  
lyre's strings are ever strung.

Keats had lifted up his hymeneal curls from out  
the poppy-seeded wine,  
With ambrosial mouth had kissed my forehead,  
clasped the hand of noble love in mine.

And at springtide, when the apple-blossoms brush  
the burnished bosom of the dove,  
Two young lovers lying in an orchard would  
have read the story of our love.

Would have read the legend of my passion,  
known the bitter secret of my heart,  
Kissed as we have kissed, but never parted as  
we two are fated now to part.

For the crimson flower of our life is eaten by  
the cankerworm of truth,  
And no hand can gather up the fallen withered  
petals of the rose of youth.

Yet I am not sorry that I loved you—ah ! what  
else had I a boy to do,—  
For the hungry teeth of time devour, and the  
silent-footed years pursue.

Rudderless, we drift athwart a tempest, and  
when once the storm of youth is past,  
Without lyre, without lute or chorus, Death  
the silent pilot comes at last.

And within the grave there is no pleasure, for  
the blindworm battens on the root,  
And Desire shudders into ashes, and the tree of  
Passion bears no fruit.

Ah ! what else had I to do but love you, God's  
own mother was less dear to me,  
And less dear the Cytheræan rising like an  
argent lily from the sea.

I have made my choice, have lived my poems,  
and, though youth is gone in wasted days,  
I have found the lover's crown of myrtle better  
than the poet's crown of bays.



## UNCOLLECTED POEMS





## FROM SPRING DAYS TO WINTER

(FOR MUSIC)

**I**N the glad springtime when leaves were  
green,  
O merrily the throstle sings!  
I sought, amid the tangled sheen,  
Love whom mine eyes had never seen,  
O the glad dove has golden wings!

Between the blossoms red and white,  
O merrily the throstle sings!  
My love first came into my sight,  
O perfect vision of delight,  
O the glad dove has golden wings!

The yellow apples glowed like fire,  
O merrily the throstle sings!  
O Love too great for lip or lyre,  
Blown rose of love and of desire,  
O the glad dove has golden wings!

But now with snow the tree is grey,

Ah, sadly now the throstle sings !

My love is dead : ah ! well-a-day,

See at her silent feet I lay

A dove with broken wings !

Ah, Love ! ah, Love ! that thou wert slain—

Fond Dove, fond Dove return again !

TRISTITIÆ

*Αἶλινον, αἶλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω.*

**O** WELL for him who lives at ease  
 With garnered gold in wide domain,  
 Nor heeds the splashing of the rain,  
 The crashing down of forest trees.

O well for him who ne'er hath known  
 The travail of the hungry years,  
 A father grey with grief and tears,  
 A mother weeping all alone.

But well for him whose foot hath trod  
 The weary road of toil and strife,  
 Yet from the sorrows of his life  
 Builds ladders to be nearer God.

## THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE

. . . ἀναγκαίως δ' ἔχει  
 βίον θερίζειν ὥστε κάρπιμον στάχυν,  
 καὶ τὸν μὲν εἶναι τὸν δὲ μή.

**T**HOU knowest all ; I seek in vain  
 What lands to till or sow with seed-  
 The land is black with briar and weed,  
 Nor cares for falling tears or rain.

Thou knowest all ; I sit and wait  
 With blinded eyes and hands that fail,  
 Till the last lifting of the veil  
 And the first opening of the gate.

Thou knowest all ; I cannot see.  
 I trust I shall not live in vain,  
 I know that we shall meet again  
 In some divine eternity.

# IMPRESSIONS

## I

### LE JARDIN

**T**HE lily's withered chalice falls  
 Around its rod of dusty gold,  
 And from the beech-trees on the wold  
 The last wood-pigeon coos and calls.

The gaudy leonine sunflower  
 Hangs black and barren on its stalk,  
 And down the windy garden walk  
 The dead leaves scatter,—hour by hour.

Pale privet-petals white as milk  
 Are blown into a snowy mass :  
 The roses lie upon the grass  
 Like little shreds of crimson silk.

## II

## LA MER

A WHITE mist drifts across the shrouds,  
A wild moon in this wintry sky  
Gleams like an angry lion's eye  
Out of a mane of tawny clouds.

The muffled steersman at the wheel  
Is but a shadow in the gloom ;—  
And in the throbbing engine-room  
Leap the long rods of polished steel.

The shattered storm has left its trace  
Upon this huge and heaving dome,  
For the thin threads of yellow foam  
Float on the waves like ravelled lace.

# UNDER THE BALCONY

O BEAUTIFUL star with the crimson  
mouth !

O moon with the brows of gold !  
Rise up, rise up, from the odorous south !  
And light for my love her way,  
Lest her little feet should stray  
On the windy hill and the wold !  
O beautiful star with the crimson mouth !  
O moon with the brows of gold !

O ship that shakes on the desolate sea !  
O ship with the wet, white sail !  
Put in, put in, to the port to me !  
For my love and I would go  
To the land where the daffodils blow  
In the heart of a violet dale !  
O ship that shakes on the desolate sea !  
O ship with the wet, white sail !

O rapturous bird with the low, sweet note !  
O bird that sits on the spray !  
Sing on, sing on, from your soft brown throat  
And my love in her little bed  
Will listen, and lift her head



From the pillow, and come my way !  
O rapturous bird with the low, sweet note !  
O bird that sits on the spray !

O blossom that hangs in the tremulous air !  
O blossom with lips of snow !  
Come down, come down, for my love to wear !  
You will die on her head in a crown,  
You will die in a fold of her gown,  
To her little light heart you will go !  
O blossom that hangs in the tremulous air !  
O blossom with lips of snow !

# THE HARLOT'S HOUSE

WE caught the tread of dancing feet,  
 We loitered down the moonlit street,  
 And stopped beneath the harlot's house.

Inside, above the din and fray,  
 We heard the loud musicians play  
 The 'Treues Liebes Herz' of Strauss.

Like strange mechanical grotesques,  
 Making fantastic arabesques,  
 The shadows raced across the blind.

We watched the ghostly dancers spin  
 To sound of horn and violin,  
 Like black leaves wheeling in the wind.

Like wire-pulled automatons,  
 Slim silhouetted skeletons  
 Went sidling through the slow quadrille,

Then took each other by the hand,  
 And danced a stately saraband;  
 Their laughter echoed thin and shrill.

Sometimes a clockwork puppet pressed  
A phantom lover to her breast,  
Sometimes they seemed to try to sing.

Sometimes a horrible marionette  
Came out, and smoked its cigarette  
Upon the steps like a live thing.

Then, turning to my love, I said,  
'The dead are dancing with the dead,  
The dust is whirling with the dust.'

But she—she heard the violin,  
And left my side, and entered in :  
Love passed into the house of lust.

Then suddenly the tune went false,  
The dancers wearied of the waltz,  
The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl.

And down the long and silent street,  
The dawn, with silver-sandalled feet,  
Crept like a frightened girl.

# LE JARDIN DES TUILERIES

**T**HIS winter air is keen and cold,  
 And keen and cold this winter sun,  
 But round my chair the children run  
 Like little things of dancing gold.

Sometimes about the painted kiosk  
 The mimic soldiers strut and stride,  
 Sometimes the blue-eyed brigands hide  
 In the bleak tangles of the bosk.

And sometimes, while the old nurse cons  
 Her book, they steal across the square,  
 And launch their paper navies where  
 Huge Triton writhes in greenish bronze.

And now in mimic flight they flee,  
 And now they rush, a boisterous band—  
 And, tiny hand on tiny hand,  
 Climb up the black and leafless tree.

Ah ! cruel tree ! if I were you,  
 And children climbed me, for their sake  
 Though it be winter I would break  
 Into spring blossoms white and blue !

ON THE SALE BY AUCTION OF  
KEATS' LOVE LETTERS

THESE are the letters which Endymion  
wrote

To one he loved in secret, and apart.

And now the brawlers of the auction mart  
Bargain and bid for each poor blotted note,  
Ay! for each separate pulse of passion quote  
The merchant's price. I think they love not  
art

Who break the crystal of a poet's heart  
That small and sickly eyes may glare and gloat.

Is it not said that many years ago,  
In a far Eastern town, some soldiers ran  
With torches through the midnight, and began  
To wrangle for mean raiment, and to throw  
Dice for the garments of a wretched man,  
Not knowing the God's wonder, or His woe?

## THE NEW REMORSE

THE sin was mine ; I did not understand.  
 So now is music prisoned in her cave,  
 Save where some ebbing desultory wave  
 Frets with its restless whirls this meagre strand.  
 And in the withered hollow of this land  
 Hath Summer dug herself so deep a grave,  
 That hardly can the leaden willow crave  
 One silver blossom from keen Winter's hand.

But who is this who cometh by the shore ?  
 (Nay, love, look up and wonder ! ) Who is this  
 Who cometh in dyed garments from the  
 South ?  
 It is thy new-found Lord, and he shall kiss  
 The yet unravished roses of thy mouth,  
 And I shall weep and worship, as before.

## FANTAISIES DÉCORATIVES

## I

## LE PANNEAU

UNDER the rose-tree's dancing shade  
There stands a little ivory girl,  
Pulling the leaves of pink and pearl  
With pale green nails of polished jade.

The red leaves fall upon the mould,  
The white leaves flutter, one by one,  
Down to a blue bowl where the sun,  
Like a great dragon, writhes in gold.

The white leaves float upon the air,  
The red leaves flutter idly down,  
Some fall upon her yellow gown,  
And some upon her raven hair.

She takes an amber lute and sings,  
And as she sings a silver crane  
Begins his scarlet neck to strain,  
And flap his burnished metal wings.

She takes a lute of amber bright,  
 And from the thicket where he lies  
 Her lover, with his almond eyes,  
 Watches her movements in delight.

And now she gives a cry of fear,  
 And tiny tears begin to start:  
 A thorn has wounded with its dart  
 The pink-veined sea-shell of her ear.

And now she laughs a merry note:  
 There has fallen a petal of the rose  
 Just where the yellow satin shows  
 The blue-veined flower of her throat.

With pale green nails of polished jade,  
 Pulling the leaves of pink and pearl,  
 There stands a little ivory girl  
 Under the rose-tree's dancing shade.



## LES BALLONS

AGAINST these turbid turquoise skies  
The light and luminous balloons  
Dip and drift like satin moons,  
Drift like silken butterflies;

Reel with every windy gust,  
Rise and reel like dancing girls,  
Float like strange transparent pearls,  
Fall and float like silver dust.

Now to the low leaves they cling,  
Each with coy fantastic pose,  
Each a petal of a rose  
Straining at a gossamer string.

Then to the tall trees they climb,  
Like thin globes of amethyst,  
Wandering opals keeping tryst  
With the rubies of the lime.

CANZONET

I HAVE no store  
 Of gryphon-guarded gold ;  
 Now, as before,  
 Bare is the shepherd's fold.  
 Rubies nor pearls  
 Have I to gem thy throat ;  
 Yet woodland girls  
 Have loved the shepherd's note.

Then pluck a reed  
 And bid me sing to thee,  
 For I would feed  
 Thine ears with melody,  
 Who art more fair  
 Than fairest fleur-de-lys,  
 More sweet and rare  
 Than sweetest ambergris.

What dost thou fear ?  
 Young Hyacinth is slain,  
 Pan is not here,  
 And will not come again.

No hornèd Faun  
Treads down the yellow leas,  
No God at dawn  
Steals through the olive trees.

Hylas is dead,  
Nor will he e'er divine  
Those little red  
Rose-petalled lips of thine.  
On the high hill  
No ivory dryads play,  
Silver and still  
Sinks the sad autumn day.

## SYMPHONY IN YELLOW

**A**n omnibus across the bridge  
 Crawls like a yellow butterfly,  
 And, here and there, a passer-by  
 Shows like a little restless midge.

Big barges full of yellow hay  
 Are moored against the shadowy wharf,  
 And, like a yellow silken scarf,  
 The thick fog hangs along the quay.

The yellow leaves begin to fade  
 And flutter from the Temple elms,  
 And at my feet the pale green Thames  
 Lies like a rod of rippled jade.

## IN THE FOREST

OUT of the mid-wood's twilight  
Into the meadow's dawn,  
Ivory limbed and brown-eyed,  
Flashes my Faun !

He skips through the copses singing,  
And his shadow dances along,  
And I know not which I should follow,  
Shadow or song !

O Hunter, snare me his shadow !  
O Nightingale, catch me his strain !  
Else moonstruck with music and madness  
I track him in vain !

# TO MY WIFE

WITH A COPY OF MY POEMS

I CAN write no stately proem  
 As a prelude to my lay;  
 From a poet to a poem  
 I would dare to say.

For if of these fallen petals  
 One to you seem fair,  
 Love will waft it till it settles  
 On your hair.

And when wind and winter harden  
 All the loveless land,  
 It will whisper of the garden,  
 You will understand.

WITH A COPY OF 'A HOUSE OF  
POMEGRANATES'

**G**O, little book,  
To him who, on a lute with horns of  
pearl,  
Sang of the white feet of the Golden Girl:  
And bid him look  
Into thy pages: it may hap that he  
May find that golden maidens dance through  
thee.

# ROSES AND RUE

To L. L.

**C**OULD we dig up this long-buried  
treasure,  
Were it worth the pleasure,  
We never could learn love's song,  
We are parted too long.

Could the passionate past that is fled  
Call back its dead,  
Could we live it all over again,  
Were it worth the pain !

I remember we used to meet  
By an ivied seat,  
And you warbled each pretty word  
With the air of a bird ;

And your voice had a quaver in it,  
Just like a linnet,  
And shook, as the blackbird's throat  
With its last big note ;

And your eyes, they were green and grey  
Like an April day,  
But lit into amethyst  
When I stooped and kissed ;



And your mouth, it would never smile  
For a long, long while,  
Then it rippled all over with laughter  
Five minutes after.

You were always afraid of a shower,  
Just like a flower :  
I remember you started and ran  
When the rain began.

I remember I never could catch you,  
For no one could match you,  
You had wonderful, luminous, fleet,  
Little wings to your feet.

I remember your hair—did I tie it ?  
For it always ran riot—  
Like a tangled sunbeam of gold :  
These things are old.

I remember so well the room,  
And the lilac bloom  
That beat at the dripping pane  
In the warm June rain ;

And the colour of your gown,  
It was amber-brown,  
And two yellow satin bows  
From your shoulders rose.

And the handkerchief of French lace  
Which you held to your face—  
Had a small tear left a stain ?  
Or was it the rain ?

On your hand as it waved adieu  
There were veins of blue ;  
In your voice as it said good-bye  
Was a petulant cry,

‘ You have only wasted your life.’  
(Ah, that was the knife !)  
When I rushed through the garden gate  
It was all too late.

Could we live it over again,  
Were it worth the pain,  
Could the passionate past that is fled  
Call back its dead !

Well, if my heart must break,  
Dear love, for your sake,  
It will break in music, I know,  
Poets’ hearts break so.

But strange that I was not told  
That the brain can hold  
In a tiny ivory cell  
God’s heaven and hell.

## DÉSESPOIR

THE seasons send their ruin as they go,  
For in the spring the narciss shows its  
head

Nor withers till the rose has flamed to red,  
And in the autumn purple violets blow,  
And the slim crocus stirs the winter snow ;  
Wherefore yon leafless trees will bloom again  
And this grey land grow green with summer rain  
And send up cowslips for some boy to mow.

But what of life whose bitter hungry sea  
Flows at our heels, and gloom of sunless night  
Covers the days which never more return ?  
Ambition, love and all the thoughts that burn  
We lose too soon, and only find delight  
In withered husks of some dead memory.

PAN

DOUBLE VILLANELLE

I

O GOAT-FOOT God of Arcady !  
 This modern world is grey and old,  
 And what remains to us of thee ?

No more the shépherd lads in glee  
 Throw apples at thy wattled fold,  
 O goat-foot God of Arcady !

Nor through the laurels can one see  
 Thy soft brown limbs, thy beard of gold,  
 And what remains to us of thee ?

And dull and dead our Thames would be,  
 For here the winds are chill and cold,  
 O goat-foot God of Arcady !

Then keep the tomb of Helice,  
 Thine olive-woods, thy vine-clad wold,  
 And what remains to us of thee ?

Though many an unsung elegy  
 Sleeps in the reeds our rivers hold,  
 O goat-foot God of Arcady !  
 Ah, what remains to us of thee ?

## II

AH, leave the hills of Arcady,  
Thy satyrs and their wanton play,  
This modern world hath need of thee.

No nymph or Faun indeed have we,  
For Faun and nymph are old and grey,  
Ah, leave the hills of Arcady!

This is the land where liberty  
Lit grave-browed Milton on his way,  
This modern world hath need of thee!

A land of ancient chivalry  
Where gentle Sidney saw the day,  
Ah, leave the hills of Arcady!

This fierce sea-lion of the sea,  
This England lacks some stronger lay,  
This modern world hath need of thee!

Then blow some trumpet loud and free,  
And give thine oaten pipe away,  
Ah, leave the hills of Arcady!  
This modern world hath need of thee!

# **'THE SPHINX**

**TO  
MARCEL SCHWOB  
IN FRIENDSHIP  
AND  
IN ADMIRATION.**



## THE SPHINX

I N a dim corner of my room for longer than  
my fancy thinks  
A beautiful and silent Sphinx has watched me  
through the shifting gloom.

Inviolatè and immobile she does not rise she  
does not stir  
For silver moons are naught to her and naught  
to her the suns that reel.

Red follows grey across the air, the waves of  
moonlight ebb and flow  
But with the Dawn she does not go and in the  
night-time she is there.

Dawn follows Dawn and Nights grow old and  
all the while this curious cat  
Lies couching on the Chinese mat with eyes of  
satin rimmed with gold.

Upon the mat she lies and leers and on the  
tawny throat of her  
Flutters the soft and silky fur or ripples to her  
pointed ears.



Come forth, my lovely seneschal! so somnolent,  
so statuesque!

Come forth you exquisite grotesque! half woman  
and half animal!

Come forth my lovely languorous Sphinx! and  
put your head upon my knee!

And let me stroke your throat and see your  
body spotted like the Lynx!

And let me touch those curving claws of yellow  
ivory and grasp

The tail that like a monstrous Asp coils round  
your heavy velvet paws

A THOUSAND weary centuries are thine  
while I have hardly seen  
Some twenty summers cast their green for  
Autumn's gaudy liveries.

But you can read the Hieroglyphs on the  
great sandstone obelisks,  
And you have talked with Basilisks, and you  
have looked on Hippogriffs.

O tell me, were you standing by when Isis to  
Osiris knelt?  
And did you watch the Egyptian melt her union  
for Antony

And drink the jewel-drunken wine and bend  
her head in mimic awe  
To see the huge proconsul draw the salted tunny  
from the brine?

And did you mark the Cyprian kiss white Adon  
on his catafalque?  
And did you follow Amenalk, the God of  
Heliopolis?

And did you talk with Thoth, and did you hear  
the moon-horned Io weep?  
And know the painted kings who sleep beneath  
the wedge-shaped Pyramid?

LIFT up your large black satin eyes which are  
like cushions where one sinks !  
Fawn at my feet, fantastic Sphinx ! and sing me  
all your memories !

Sing to me of the Jewish maid who wandered  
with the Holy Child,  
And how you led them through the wild, and  
how they slept beneath your shade.

Sing to me of that odorous green eve when  
crouching by the marge  
You heard from Adrian's gilded barge the  
laughter of Antinous

And lapped the stream and fed your drouth and  
watched with hot and hungry stare  
The ivory body of that rare young slave with  
his pomegranate mouth !

Sing to me of the Labyrinth in which the twi-  
formed bull was stalled !  
Sing to me of the night you crawled across the  
temple's granite plinth

When through the purple corridors the screaming  
scarlet Ibis flew

In terror, and a horrid dew dripped from the  
moaning Mandragores,

And the great torpid crocodile within the tank  
shed slimy tears,

And tare the jewels from his ears and staggered  
back into the Nile,

And the priests cursed you with shrill psalms as  
in your claws you seized their snake

And crept away with it to slake your passion by  
the shuddering palms.

**W**HO were your lovers? who were they  
who wrestled for you in the dust?  
Which was the vessel of your Lust? What  
Leman had you, every day?

Did giant Lizards come and crouch before you  
on the reedy banks?

Did Gryphons with great metal flanks leap on  
you in your trampled couch?

Did monstrous hippopotami come sidling toward  
you in the mist?

Did gilt-scaled dragons writhe and twist with  
passion as you passed them by?

And from the brick-built Lycian tomb what  
horrible Chimera came

With fearful heads and fearful flame to breed  
new wonders from your womb?

**O**R had you shameful secret quests and did  
you harry to your home  
Some Nereid coiled in amber foam with curious  
rock crystal breasts?

Or did you treading through the froth call to  
the brown Sidonian  
For tidings of Leviathan, Leviathan or Be-  
hemoth?

Or did you when the sun was set climb up the  
cactus-covered slope  
To meet your swarthy Ethiop whose body was  
of polished jet?

Or did you while the earthen skiffs dropped  
down the grey Nilotic flats  
At twilight and the flickering bats flew round  
the temple's triple glyphs

Steal to the border of the bar and swim across  
the silent lake  
And slink into the vault and make the Pyramid  
your lupanar

Till from each black sarcophagus rose up the  
painted swathèd dead ?

Or did you lure unto your bed the ivory-horned  
Tragelaphos ?

Or did you love the god of flies who plagued  
the Hebrews and was splashed

With wine unto the waist ? or Pasht, who had  
green beryls for her eyes ?

Or that young god, the Tyrian, who was more  
amorous than the dove

Of Ashtaroth ? or did you love the god of the  
Assyrian

Whose wings, like strange transparent talc, rose  
high above his hawk-faced head,

Painted with silver and with red and ribbed with  
rods of Oreichalch ?

Or did huge Apis from his car leap down and  
lay before your feet

Big blossoms of the honey-sweet and honey-  
coloured nenuphar ?



**H**OW subtle-secret is your smile ! Did you  
love none then ? Nay, I know  
Great Ammon was your bedfellow ! He lay with  
you beside the Nile !

The river-horses in the slime trumpeted when  
they saw him come  
Odorous with Syrian galbanum and smeared with  
spikenard and with thyme.

He came along the river bank like some tall  
galley argent-sailed,  
He strode across the waters, mailed in beauty,  
and the waters sank.

He strode across the desert sand : he reached  
the valley where you lay :  
He waited till the dawn of day : then touched  
your black breasts with his hand.

You kissed his mouth with mouths of flame :  
you made the hornèd god your own :  
You stood behind him on his throne : you called  
him by his secret name.

You whispered monstrous oracles into the  
caverns of his ears :

With blood of goats and blood of steers you  
taught him monstrous miracles.

White Ammon was your bedfellow ! Your  
chamber was the steaming Nile !

And with your curved archaic smile you watched  
his passion come and go.

WITH Syrian oils his brows were bright:  
and wide-spread as a tent at noon  
His marble limbs made pale the moon and lent  
the day a larger light.

His long hair was nine cubits' span and coloured  
like that yellow gem  
Which hidden in their garment's hem the  
merchants bring from Kurdistan.

His face was as the must that lies upon a vat of  
new-made wine:  
The seas could not insapphirine the perfect azure  
of his eyes.

His thick soft throat was white as milk and  
threaded with thin veins of blue:  
And curious pearls like frozen dew were  
broidered on his flowing silk.

**O**N pearl and porphyry pedestalled he was  
too bright to look upon :  
For on his ivory breast there shone the wondrous  
ocean-emerald,

That mystic moonlit jewel which some diver of  
the Colchian caves  
Had found beneath the blackening waves and  
carried to the Colchian witch.

Before his gilded galiot ran naked vine-wreathed  
corybants,  
And lines of swaying elephants knelt down to  
draw his chariot,

And lines of swarthy Nubians bare up his litter  
as he rode  
Down the great granite-paven road between the  
nodding peacock-fans.

The merchants brought him steatite from Sidon  
in their painted ships :  
The meanest cup that touched his lips was  
fashioned from a chrysolite.

The merchants brought him cedar chests of rich  
apparel bound with cords :  
His train was borne by Memphian lords : young  
kings were glad to be his guests.

Ten hundred shaven priests did bow to Ammon's  
altar day and night,  
Ten hundred lamps did wave their light through  
Ammon's carven house—and now

Foul snake and speckled adder with their young  
ones crawl from stone to stone  
For ruined is the house and prone the great  
rose-marble monolith !

Wild ass or trotting jackal comes and couches  
in the mouldering gates :  
Wild satyrs call unto their mates across the  
fallen fluted drums.

And on the summit of the pile the blue-faced  
ape of Horus sits  
And gibbers while the fig-tree splits the pillars  
of the peristyle

THE god is scattered here and there : deep  
hidden in the windy sand  
I saw his giant granite hand still clenched in  
impotent despair.

And many a wandering caravan of stately  
negroes silken-shawled,  
Crossing the desert, halts appalled before the  
neck that none can span.

And many a bearded Bedouin draws back his  
yellow-striped burnous  
To gaze upon the Titan thews of him who was  
thy paladin.

**G**O, seek his fragments on the moor and  
wash them in the evening dew,  
And from their pieces make anew thy mutilated  
paramour !

Go, seek them where they lie alone and from  
their broken pieces make  
Thy bruised bedfellow ! And wake mad passions  
in the senseless stone !

Charm his dull ear with Syrian hymns ! he loved  
your body ! oh, be kind,  
Pour spikenard on his hair, and wind soft rolls  
of linen round his limbs !

Wind round his head the figured coins ! stain  
with red fruits those pallid lips !  
Weave purple for his shrunken hips ! and purple  
for his barren loins !

**A**WAY to Egypt! Have no fear. Only one  
God has ever died.  
Only one God has let His side be wounded by a  
soldier's spear.

But these, thy lovers, are not dead. Still by the  
hundred-cubit gate  
Dog-faced Anubis sits in state with lotus-lilies  
for thy head.

Still from his chair of porphyry gaunt Memnon  
strains his lidless eyes  
Across the empty land, and cries each yellow  
morning unto thee.

And Nilus with his broken horn lies in his black  
and oozy bed  
And till thy coming will not spread his waters on  
the withering corn.

Your lovers are not dead, I know. They will  
rise up and hear your voice  
And clash their cymbals and rejoice and run to  
kiss your mouth! And so,



Set wings upon your argosies! Set horses to  
your ebon car!  
Back to your Nile! Or if you are grown sick of  
dead divinities

Follow some roving lion's spoor across the copper-  
coloured plain,  
Reach out and hale him by the mane and bid  
him be your paramour!

Couch by his side upon the grass and set your  
white teeth in his throat  
And when you hear his dying note lash your  
long flanks of polished brass

And take a tiger for your mate, whose amber  
sides are flecked with black,  
And ride upon his gilded back in triumph  
through the Theban gate,

And toy with him in amorous jests, and when  
he turns, and snarls, and gnaws,  
O smite him with your jasper claws! and bruise  
him with your agate breasts!

**W**HY are you tarrying? Get hence! I  
weary of your sullen ways,  
I weary of your steadfast gaze, your somnolent  
magnificence.

Your horrible and heavy breath makes the light  
flicker in the lamp,  
And on my brow I feel the damp and dreadful  
dews of night and death.

Your eyes are like fantastic moons that shiver  
in some stagnant lake,  
Your tongue is like a scarlet snake that dances  
to fantastic tunes,

Your pulse makes poisonous melodies, and your  
black throat is like the hole  
Left by some torch or burning coal on Saracenic  
tapestries.

Away! The sulphur-coloured stars are hurrying  
through the Western gate!  
Away! Or it may be too late to climb their  
silent silver cars!

See, the dawn shivers round the grey gilt-dialled  
towers, and the rain  
Streams down each diamonded pane and blurs  
with tears the wannish day.

What snake-tressed fury fresh from Hell, with  
uncouth gestures and unclean,  
Stole from the poppy-drowsy queen and led you  
to a student's cell?

**W**HAT songless tongueless ghost of sin crept  
through the curtains of the night,  
And saw my taper burning bright, and knocked,  
and bade you enter in ?

Are there not others more accursed, whiter with  
leprosies than I ?  
Are Abana and Pharphar dry that you come here  
to slake your thirst ?

Get hence, you loathsome mystery ! Hideous  
animal, get hence !  
You wake in me each bestial sense, you make me  
what I would not be.

You make my creed a barren sham, you wake  
foul dreams of sensual life,  
And Atys with his blood-stained knife were  
better than the thing I am.

False Sphinx ! False Sphinx ! By reedy Styx  
old Charon, leaning on his oar,  
Waits for my coin. Go thou before, and leave  
me to my crucifix,

Whose pallid burden, sick with pain, watches  
the world with wearied eyes,  
And weeps for every soul that dies, and weeps  
for every soul in vain.

# **THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL**



**IN MEMORIAM**

**C. T. W.**

**SOMETIME TROOPER OF THE ROYAL HORSE GUARDS**

**DIED H.M. PRISON, READING, BERKSHIRE**

**JULY 7, 1896**





## THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL

### I

**H**E did not wear his scarlet coat,  
For blood and wine are red,  
And blood and wine were on his hands  
When they found him with the dead,  
The poor dead woman whom he loved,  
And murdered in her bed.

He walked amongst the Trial Men  
In a suit of shabby grey;  
A cricket cap was on his head,  
And his step seemed light and gay;  
But I never saw a man who looked  
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked  
With such a wistful eye  
Upon that little tent of blue  
Which prisoners call the sky,  
And at every drifting cloud that went  
With sails of silver by.

I walked, with other souls in pain,  
Within another ring,  
And was wondering if the man had done  
A great or little thing,  
When a voice behind me whispered low,  
*'That fellow's got to swing.'*

Dear Christ! the very prison walls  
Suddenly seemed to reel,  
And the sky above my head became  
Like a casque of scorching steel;  
And, though I was a soul in pain,  
My pain I could not feel.

I only knew what hunted thought  
Quickened his step, and why  
He looked upon the garish day  
With such a wistful eye;  
The man had killed the thing he loved,  
And so he had to die.



Yet each man kills the thing he loves,  
By each let this be heard,  
Some do it with a bitter look,  
Some with a flattering word,  
The coward does it with a kiss,  
The brave man with a sword!

Some kill their love when they are young,  
And some when they are old ;  
Some strangle with the hands of Lust,  
Some with the hands of Gold :  
The kindest use a knife, because  
The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little, some too long,  
Some sell, and others buy ;  
Some do the deed with many tears,  
And some without a sigh :  
For each man kills the thing he loves,  
Yet each man does not die.

He does not die a death of shame  
On a day of dark disgrace,  
Nor have a noose about his neck,  
Nor a cloth upon his face,  
Nor drop feet foremost through the floor  
Into an empty space.



He does not sit with silent men  
Who watch him night and day ;  
Who watch him when he tries to weep,  
And when he tries to pray ;  
Who watch him lest himself should rob  
The prison of its prey.

He does not wake at dawn to see  
Dread figures throng his room,  
The shivering Chaplain robed in white,  
The Sheriff stern with gloom,  
And the Governor all in shiny black,  
With the yellow face of Doom.

He does not rise in piteous haste  
To put on convict-clothes,  
While some coarse-mouthed Doctor gloats,  
and notes  
Each new and nerve-twitched pose,  
Fingering a watch whose little ticks  
Are like horrible hammer-blows.

He does not know that sickening thirst  
That sands one's throat, before  
The hangman with his gardener's gloves  
Slips through the padded door,  
And binds one with three leathern thongs,  
That the throat may thirst no more.

He does not bend his head to hear  
The Burial Office read,  
Nor, while the terror of his soul  
Tells him he is not dead,  
Cross his own coffin, as he moves  
Into the hideous shed.

He does not stare upon the air  
Through a little roof of glass :  
He does not pray with lips of clay  
For his agony to pass ;  
Nor feel upon his shuddering cheek  
The kiss of Caiaphas.

## II

SIX weeks our guardsman walked the yard,  
In the suit of shabby grey :  
His cricket cap was on his head,  
And his step seemed light and gay,  
But I never saw a man who looked  
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked  
With such a wistful eye  
Upon that little tent of blue  
Which prisoners call the sky,  
And at every wandering cloud that trailed  
Its ravelled fleeces by.

He did not wring his hands, as do  
Those witless men who dare  
To try to rear the changeling Hope  
In the cave of black Despair :  
He only looked upon the sun,  
And drank the morning air.

He did not wring his hands nor weep,  
 Nor did he peek or pine,  
 But he drank the air as though it held  
 Some healthful anodyne ;  
 With open mouth he drank the sun  
 As though it had been wine !

And I and all the souls in pain,  
 Who tramped the other ring,  
 Forgot if we ourselves had done  
 A great or little thing,  
 And watched with gaze of dull amaze  
 The man who had to swing.

And strange it was to see him pass  
 With a step so light and gay,  
 And strange it was to see him look  
 So wistfully at the day,  
 And strange it was to think that he  
 Had such a debt to pay.



For oak and elm have pleasant leaves  
 That in the spring-time shoot :  
 But grim to see is the gallows-tree,  
 With its adder-bitten root,  
 And, green or dry, a man must die  
 Before it bears its fruit !



The loftiest place is that seat of grace  
For which all worldlings try :  
But who would stand in hempen band  
Upon a scaffold high,  
And through a murderer's collar take  
His last look at the sky ?

It is sweet to dance to violins  
When Love and Life are fair :  
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes  
Is delicate and rare :  
But it is not sweet with nimble feet  
To dance upon the air !

So with curious eyes and sick surmise  
We watched him day by day,  
And wondered if each one of us  
Would end the self-same way,  
For none can tell to what red Hell  
His sightless soul may stray.

At last the dead man walked no more  
Amongst the Trial Men,  
And I knew that he was standing up  
In the black dock's dreadful pen,  
And that never would I see his face  
In God's sweet world again.

Like two doomed ships that pass in storm  
We had crossed each other's way :  
But we made no sign, we said no word,  
We had no word to say ;  
For we did not meet in the holy night,  
But in the shameful day.

A prison wall was round us both,  
Two outcast men we were :  
The world had thrust us from its heart,  
And God from out His care :  
And the iron gin that waits for Sin  
Had caught us in its snare.

We tore the tarry rope to shreds  
With blunt and bleeding nails ;  
We rubbed the doors, and scrubbed the floors,  
And cleaned the shining rails :  
And, rank by rank, we soaped the plank,  
And clattered with the pails.

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,  
We turned the dusty drill :  
We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,  
And sweated on the mill :  
But in the heart of every man  
Terror was lying still.

So still it lay that every day  
Crawled like a weed-clogged wave :  
And we forgot the bitter lot  
That waits for fool and knave,  
Till once, as we tramped in from work,  
We passed an open grave.

With yawning mouth the yellow hole  
Gaped for a living thing ;  
The very mud cried out for blood  
To the thirsty asphalte ring :  
And we knew that ere one dawn grew fair  
Some prisoner had to swing.

Right in we went, with soul intent  
 On Death and Dread and Doom :  
 The hangman, with his little bag,  
 Went shuffling through the gloom :  
 And each man trembled as he crept  
 Into his numbered tomb.



That night the empty corridors  
 Were full of forms of Fear,  
 And up and down the iron town  
 Stole feet we could not hear,  
 And through the bars that hide the stars  
 White faces seemed to peer.

He lay as one who lies and dreams  
 In a pleasant meadow-land,  
 The watchers watched him as he slept,  
 And could not understand  
 How one could sleep so sweet a sleep  
 With a hangman close at hand.

But there is no sleep when men must weep  
 Who never yet have wept :  
 So we—the fool, the fraud, the knave—  
 That endless vigil kept,  
 And through each brain on hands of pain  
 Another's terror crept.

Alas! it is a fearful thing  
To feel another's guilt!  
For, right within, the sword of Sin  
Pierced to its poisoned hilt,  
And as molten lead were the tears we shed  
For the blood we had not spilt.

The Warders with their shoes of felt  
Crept by each padlocked door,  
And peeped and saw, with eyes of awe,  
Grey figures on the floor,  
And wondered why men knelt to pray  
Who never prayed before.

All through the night we knelt and prayed,  
Mad mourners of a corse!  
The troubled plumes of midnight were  
The plumes upon a hearse:  
And bitter wine upon a sponge  
Was the savour of Remorse.



The grey cock crew, the red cock crew,  
But never came the day:  
And crooked shapes of Terror crouched,  
In the corners where we lay:  
And each evil sprite that walks by night  
Before us seemed to play.

They glided past, they glided fast,  
 Like travellers through a mist :  
 They mocked the moon in a rigadoon  
 Of delicate turn and twist,  
 And with formal pace and loathsome grace  
 The phantoms kept their tryst.

With mop and mow, we saw them go,  
 Slim shadows hand in hand :  
 About, about, in ghostly rout  
 They trod a saraband :  
 And the damned grotesques made arabesques,  
 Like the wind upon the sand !

With the pirouettes of marionettes,  
 They tripped on pointed tread :  
 But with flutes of Fear they filled the ear,  
 As their grisly masque they led,  
 And loud they sang, and long they sang,  
 For they sang to wake the dead.

*'Oho !' they cried, 'The world is wide,  
 But fettered limbs go lame !  
 And once, or twice, to throw the dice  
 Is a gentlemanly game,  
 But he does not win who plays with Sin  
 In the secret House of Shame.'*

No things of air these antics were,  
That frolicked with such glee :  
To men whose lives were held in gyves,  
And whose feet might not go free,  
Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living  
things,  
Most terrible to see.

Around, around, they waltzed and wound ;  
Some wheeled in smirking pairs ;  
With the mincing step of a demirep  
Some sidled up the stairs :  
And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,  
Each helped us at our prayers.

The morning wind began to moan,  
But still the night went on :  
Through its giant loom the web of gloom  
Crept till each thread was spun :  
And, as we prayed, we grew afraid  
Of the Justice of the Sun.

The moaning wind went wandering round  
The weeping prison-wall :  
Till like a wheel of turning steel  
We felt the minutes crawl :  
O moaning wind ! what had we done  
To have such a seneschal ?

At last I saw the shadowed bars,  
 Like a lattice wrought in lead,  
 Move right across the whitewashed wall  
 That faced my three-plank bed,  
 And I knew that somewhere in the world  
 God's dreadful dawn was red.

At six o'clock we cleaned our cells,  
 At seven all was still,  
 But the sough and swing of a mighty wing  
 The prison seemed to fill,  
 For the Lord of Death with icy breath  
 Had entered in to kill.

He did not pass in purple pomp,  
 Nor ride a moon-white steed.  
 Three yards of cord and a sliding board  
 Are all the gallows' need :  
 So with rope of shame the Herald came  
 To do the secret deed.

We were as men who through a fen  
 Of filthy darkness grope :  
 We did not dare to breathe a prayer,  
 Or to give our anguish scope :  
 Something was dead in each of us,  
 And what was dead was Hope.



For Man's grim Justice goes its way,  
And will not swerve aside :  
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,  
It has a deadly stride :  
With iron heel it slays the strong,  
The monstrous parricide !

We waited for the stroke of eight :  
Each tongue was thick with thirst :  
For the stroke of eight is the stroke of Fate  
That makes a man accursed,  
And Fate will use a running noose  
For the best man and the worst.

We had no other thing to do,  
Save to wait for the sign to come :  
So, like things of stone in a valley lone,  
Quiet we sat and dumb :  
But each man's heart beat thick and quick,  
Like a madman on a drum !

With sudden shock the prison-clock  
Smote on the shivering air,  
And from all the gaol rose up a wail  
Of impotent despair,  
Like the sound that frightened marshes hear  
From some leper in his lair.

And as one sees most fearful things  
In the crystal of a dream,  
We saw the greasy hempen rope  
Hooked to the blackened beam,  
And heard the prayer the hangman's snare  
Strangled into a scream.

And all the woe that moved him so  
That he gave that bitter cry,  
And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats,  
None knew so well as I :  
For he who lives more lives than one  
More deaths than one must die.

## IV

THERE is no chapel on the day  
On which they hang a man :  
The Chaplain's heart is far too sick,  
Or his face is far too wan,  
Or there is that written in his eyes  
Which none should look upon.

So they kept us close till nigh on noon,  
And then they rang the bell,  
And the Warders with their jingling keys  
Opened each listening cell,  
And down the iron stair we tramped,  
Each from his separate Hell.

Out into God's sweet air we went,  
But not in wonted way,  
For this man's face was white with fear,  
And that man's face was grey,  
And I never saw sad men who looked  
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw sad men who looked  
With such a wistful eye  
Upon that little tent of blue  
We prisoners called the sky,  
And at every careless cloud that passed  
In happy freedom by.

But there were those amongst us all  
Who walked with downcast head,  
And knew that, had each got his due,  
They should have died instead :  
He had but killed a thing that lived,  
Whilst they had killed the dead.

For he who sins a second time  
Wakes a dead soul to pain,  
And draws it from its spotted shroud,  
And makes it bleed again,  
And makes it bleed great gout of blood,  
And makes it bleed in vain !



Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb  
With crooked arrows starred,  
Silently we went round and round  
The slippery asphalte yard ;  
Silently we went round and round,  
And no man spoke a word.

Silently we went round and round,  
And through each hollow mind  
The Memory of dreadful things  
Rushed like a dreadful wind,  
And Horror stalked before each man,  
And Terror crept behind.



The Warders strutted up and down,  
And kept their herd of brutes,  
Their uniforms were spick and span,  
And they wore their Sunday suits,  
But we knew the work they had been at,  
By the quicklime on their boots.

For where a grave had opened wide,  
There was no grave at all :  
Only a stretch of mud and sand  
By the hideous prison-wall,  
And a little heap of burning lime,  
That the man should have his pall.

For he has a pall, this wretched man,  
Such as few men can claim :  
Deep down below a prison-yard,  
Naked for greater shame,  
He lies, with fetters on each foot,  
Wrapt in a sheet of flame !

And all the while the burning lime  
Eats flesh and bone away,  
It eats the brittle bone by night,  
And the soft flesh by day,  
It eats the flesh and bone by turns,  
But it eats the heart away.



For three long years they will not sow  
Or root or seedling there :  
For three long years the unblessed spot  
Will sterile be and bare,  
And look upon the wondering sky  
With unreproachful stare.

They think a murderer's heart would taint  
Each simple seed they sow.  
It is not true ! God's kindly earth  
Is kindlier than men know,  
And the red rose would but blow more red,  
The white rose whiter blow.

Out of his mouth a red, red rose !  
Out of his heart a white !  
For who can say by what strange way,  
Christ brings His will to light,  
Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore  
Bloomed in the great Pope's sight ?

But neither milk-white rose nor red  
    May bloom in prison-air ;  
The shard, the pebble, and the flint,  
    Are what they give us there :  
For flowers have been known to heal  
    A common man's despair.

So never will wine-red rose or white,  
    Petal by petal, fall  
On that stretch of mud and sand that lies  
    By the hideous prison-wall,  
To tell the men who tramp the yard  
    That God's Son died for all.



Yet though the hideous prison-wall  
    Still hems him round and round,  
And a spirit may not walk by night  
    That is with fetters bound,  
And a spirit may but weep that lies  
    In such unholy ground,

He is at peace—this wretched man—  
    At peace, or will be soon :  
There is no thing to make him mad,  
    Nor does Terror walk at noon,  
For the lampless Earth in which he lies  
    Has neither Sun nor Moon.

They hanged him as a beast is hanged :  
They did not even toll  
A requiem that might have brought  
Rest to his startled soul,  
But hurriedly they took him out,  
And hid him in a hole.

They stripped him of his canvas clothes,  
And gave him to the flies :  
They mocked the swollen purple throat,  
And the stark and staring eyes :  
And with laughter loud they heaped the  
shroud  
In which their convict lies.

The Chaplain would not kneel to pray  
By his dishonoured grave :  
Nor mark it with that blessed Cross  
That Christ for sinners gave,  
Because the man was one of those  
Whom Christ came down to save.

Yet all is well ; he has but passed  
To Life's appointed bourne :  
And alien tears will fill for him  
Pity's long-broken urn,  
For his mourners will be outcast men,  
And outcasts always mourn



## v

I KNOW not whether Laws be right,  
Or whether Laws be wrong;  
All that we know who lie in gaol  
Is that the wall is strong;  
And that each day is like a year,  
A year whose days are long.

But this I know, that every Law  
That men have made for Man,  
Since first Man took his brother's life,  
And the sad world began,  
But straws the wheat and saves the chaff  
With a most evil fan.

This too I know—and wise it were  
If each could know the same—  
That every prison that men build  
Is built with bricks of shame,  
And bound with bars lest Christ should see  
How men their brothers maim.

With bars they blur the gracious moon,  
 And blind the goodly sun :  
 And they do well to hide their Hell,  
 For in it things are done  
 That Son of God nor son of Man  
 Ever should look upon !



The vilest deeds like poison weeds,  
 Bloom well in prison-air ;  
 It is only what is good in Man  
 That wastes and withers there :  
 Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,  
 And the Warder is Despair.

For they starve the little frightened child  
 Till it weeps both night and day :  
 And they scourge the weak, and flog the  
 fool,  
 And gibe the old and grey,  
 And some grow mad, and all grow bad,  
 And none a word may say.

Each narrow cell in which we dwell  
 Is a foul and dark latrine,  
 And the fetid breath of living Death  
 Chokes up each grated screen,  
 And all, but Lust, is turned to dust  
 In Humanity's machine.

The brackish water that we drink  
Creeps with a loathsome slime,  
And the bitter bread they weigh in scales  
Is full of chalk and lime,  
And Sleep will not lie down, but walks  
Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.



But though lean Hunger and green Thirst  
Like asp with adder fight,  
We have little care of prison fare,  
For what chills and kills outright  
Is that every stone one lifts by day  
Becomes one's heart by night.

With midnight always in one's heart,  
And twilight in one's cell,  
We turn the crank, or tear the rope,  
Each in his separate Hell,  
And the silence is more awful far  
Than the sound of a brazen bell.

And never a human voice comes near  
To speak a gentle word :  
And the eye that watches through the door  
Is pitiless and hard :  
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,  
With soul and body marred.

And thus we rust Life's iron chain  
Degraded and alone :  
And some men curse, and some men weep,  
And some men make no moan :  
But God's eternal Laws are kind  
And break the heart of stone.



And every human heart that breaks,  
In prison-cell or yard,  
Is as that broken box that gave  
Its treasure to the Lord,  
And filled the unclean leper's house  
With the scent of costliest nard.

Ah ! happy they whose hearts can break  
And peace of pardon win !  
How else may man make straight his plan  
And cleanse his soul from Sin ?  
How else but through a broken heart  
May Lord Christ enter in ?



And he of the swollen purple throat,  
And the stark and staring eyes,  
Waits for the holy hands that took  
The Thief to Paradise ;  
And a broken and a contrite heart  
The Lord will not despise.

The man in red who reads the Law  
Gave him three weeks of life,  
Three little weeks in which to heal  
His soul of his soul's strife,  
And cleanse from every blot of blood  
The hand that held the knife.

And with tears of blood he cleansed the  
hand,  
The hand that held the steel :  
For only blood can wipe out blood,  
And only tears can heal :  
And the crimson stain that was of Cain  
Became Christ's snow-white seal.

VI

**I**N Reading gaol by Reading town  
 There is a pit of shame,  
 And in it lies a wretched man  
 Eaten by teeth of flame,  
 In a burning winding-sheet he lies,  
 And his grave has got no name.

And there, till Christ call forth the dead,  
 In silence let him lie :  
 No need to waste the foolish tear,  
 Or heave the windy sigh :  
 The man had killed the thing he loved,  
 And so he had to die.

And all men kill the thing they love,  
 By all let this be heard,  
 Some do it with a bitter look,  
 Some with a flattering word,  
 The coward does it with a kiss,  
 The brave man with a sword !



*Newdigate Prize Poem*

**RAVENNA**

**Recited in the Sheldonian Theatre  
Oxford  
June 26th, 1878**

**TO MY FRIEND  
GEORGE FLEMING  
AUTHOR OF  
'THE NILE NOVEL' AND 'MIRAGE'**



*Ravenna, March 1877*  
*Oxford, March 1878*

## RAVENNA

### I

A YEAR ago I breathed the Italian air,—  
And yet, methinks this northern Spring  
is fair,—

These fields made golden with the flower of  
March,

The throstle singing on the feathered larch,  
The cawing rooks, the wood-doves fluttering by,  
The little clouds that race across the sky ;  
And fair the violet's gentle drooping head,  
The primrose, pale for love uncomforted,  
The rose that burgeons on the climbing briar,  
The crocus-bed, (that seems a moon of fire  
Round-girdled with a purple marriage-ring) ;  
And all the flowers of our English Spring,  
Fond snowdrops, and the bright-starred daffodil.  
Up starts the lark beside the murmuring mill,  
And breaks the gossamer-threads of early dew ;  
And down the river, like a flame of blue,  
Keen as an arrow flies the water-king,  
While the brown linnets in the greenwood sing.  
A year ago !—it seems a little time  
Since last I saw that lordly southern clime,

Where flower and fruit to purple radiance blow,  
And like bright lamps the fabled apples glow.  
Full Spring it was—and by rich flowering vines,  
Dark olive-groves and noble forest-pines,  
I rode at will; the moist glad air was sweet,  
The white road rang beneath my horse's feet,  
And musing on Ravenna's ancient name,  
I watched the day till, marked with wounds of  
    flame,  
The turquoise sky to burnished gold was turned.

O how my heart with boyish passion burned,  
When far away across the sedge and mere  
I saw that Holy City rising clear,  
Crowned with her crown of towers!—On and on  
I galloped, racing with the setting sun,  
And ere the crimson after-glow was passed,  
I stood within Ravenna's walls at last!

## II

How strangely still! no sound of life or joy  
Startles the air; no laughing shepherd-boy  
Pipes on his reed, nor ever through the day  
Comes the glad sound of children at their play:  
O sad, and sweet, and silent! surely here  
A man might dwell apart from troublous fear,  
Watching the tide of seasons as they flow  
From amorous Spring to Winter's rain and  
    snow,

And have no thought of sorrow ;—here, indeed,  
Are Lethe's waters, and that fatal weed  
Which makes a man forget his fatherland.

Ay ! amid lotus-meadows dost thou stand,  
Like Proserpine, with poppy-laden head,  
Guarding the holy ashes of the dead.  
For though thy brood of warrior sons hath  
ceased,  
Thy noble dead are with thee !—they at least  
Are faithful to thine honour :—guard them well,  
O childless city ! for a mighty spell,  
To wake men's hearts to dreams of things sub-  
lime,  
Are the lone tombs where rest the Great of  
Time.

## III

Yon lonely pillar, rising on the plain,  
Marks where the bravest knight of France was  
slain,—  
The Prince of chivalry, the Lord of war,  
Gaston de Foix : for some untimely star  
Led him against thy city, and he fell,  
As falls some forest-lion fighting well.  
Taken from life while life and love were new,  
He lies beneath God's seamless veil of blue ;  
Tall lance-like reeds wave sadly o'er his head,  
And oleanders bloom to deeper red,

Where his bright youth flowed crimson on the  
ground.

Look farther north unto that broken mound,—  
There, prisoned now within a lordly tomb  
Raised by a daughter's hand, in lonely gloom,  
Huge-limbed Theodoric, the Gothic king,  
Sleeps after all his weary conquering.  
Time hath not spared his ruin,—wind and rain  
Have broken down his stronghold ; and again  
We see that Death is mighty lord of all,  
And king and clown to ashen dust must fall.

Mighty indeed *their* glory ! yet to me  
Barbaric king, or knight of chivalry,  
Or the great queen herself, were poor and vain,  
Beside the grave where Dante rests from pain.  
His gilded shrine lies open to the air ;  
And cunning sculptor's hands have carven there  
The calm white brow, as calm as earliest morn,  
The eyes that flashed with passionate love and  
scorn,  
The lips that sang of Heaven and of Hell,  
The almond-face which Giotto drew so well,  
The weary face of Dante ;—to this day,  
Here in his place of resting, far away  
From Arno's yellow waters, rushing down  
Through the wide bridges of that fairy town,  
Where the tall tower of Giotto seems to rise—  
A marble lily under sapphire skies !

Alas ! my Dante ! thou hast known the pain  
Of meaner lives,—the exile's galling chain,  
How steep the stairs within kings' houses are,  
And all the petty miseries which mar  
Man's nobler nature with the sense of wrong.  
Yet this dull world is grateful for thy song ;  
Our nations do thee homage,—even she,  
That cruel queen of vine-clad Tuscany,  
Who bound with crown of thorns thy living  
brow,  
Hath decked thine empty tomb with laurels  
now,  
And begs in vain the ashes of her son.

O mightiest exile ! all thy grief is done :  
Thy soul walks now beside thy Beatrice ;  
Ravenna guards thine ashes : sleep in peace.

## IV

How lone this palace is ; how grey the walls !  
No minstrel now wakes echoes in these halls.  
The broken chain lies rusting on the door,  
And noisome weeds have split the marble  
floor :  
Here lurks the snake, and here the lizards run  
By the stone lions blinking in the sun.  
Byron dwelt here in love and revelry  
For two long years—a second Anthony,

Who of the world another Actium made !  
Yet suffered not his royal soul to fade,  
Or lyre to break, or lance to grow less keen,  
'Neath any wiles of an Egyptian queen.  
For from the East there came a mighty cry,  
And Greece stood up to fight for Liberty,  
And called him from Ravenna : never knight  
Rode forth more nobly to wild scenes of fight !  
None fell more bravely on ensanguined field,  
Borne like a Spartan back upon his shield !  
O Hellas ! Hellas ! in thine hour of pride,  
Thy day of might, remember him who died  
To wrest from off thy limbs the trammelling  
chain :

O Salamis ! O lone Plataean plain !  
O tossing waves of wild Eubœan sea !  
O wind-swept heights of lone Thermopylæ !  
He loved you well—ay, not alone in word,  
Who freely gave to thee his lyre and sword,  
Like Æschylos at well-fought Marathon :

And England, too, shall glory in her son,  
Her warrior-poet, first in song and fight.  
No longer now shall Slander's venom'd spite  
Crawl like a snake across his perfect name,  
Or mar the lordly scutcheon of his fame.

For as the olive-garland of the race,  
Which lights with joy each eager runner's  
face,

As the red cross which saveth men in war,  
As a flame-bearded beacon seen from far  
By mariners upon a storm-tossed sea,—  
Such was his love for Greece and Liberty !

Byron, thy crowns are ever fresh and green :  
Red leaves of rose from Sapphic Mitylene  
Shall bind thy brows ; the myrtle blooms for  
thee,  
In hidden glades by lonely Castaly ;  
The laurels wait thy coming : all are thine,  
And round thy head one perfect wreath will  
twine.

## v

The pine-tops rocked before the evening  
breeze  
With the hoarse murmur of the wintry seas,  
And the tall stems were streaked with amber  
bright ;—  
I wandered through the wood in wild delight,  
Some startled bird, with fluttering wings and fleet,  
Made snow of all the blossoms ; at my feet,  
Like silver crowns, the pale narcissi lay,  
And small birds sang on every twining spray.  
O waving trees, O forest liberty !  
Within your haunts at least a man is free,  
And half forgets the weary world of strife :  
The blood flows hotter, and a sense of life



Wakes i' the quickening veins, while once again  
The woods are filled with gods we fancied  
slain.

Long time I watched, and surely hoped to see  
Some goat-foot Pan make merry minstrelsy  
Amid the reeds ! some startled Dryad-maid  
In girlish flight ! or lurking in the glade,  
The soft brown limbs, the wanton treacherous  
face

Of woodland god ! Queen Dian in the chase,  
White-limbed and terrible, with look of pride,  
And leash of boar-hounds leaping at her side !  
Or Hylas mirrored in the perfect stream.

O idle heart ! O fond Hellenic dream !  
Ere long, with melancholy rise and swell,  
The evening chimes, the convent's vesper bell,  
Struck on mine ears amid the amorous flowers.  
Alas ! alas ! these sweet and honied hours  
Had whelmed my heart like some encroaching  
sea,  
And drowned all thoughts of black Gethsemane.

## VI

O lone Ravenna ! many a tale is told  
Of thy great glories in the days of old :  
Two thousand years have passed since thou  
didst see  
Cæsar ride forth to royal victory.

Mighty thy name when Rome's lean eagles flew  
From Britain's isles to far Euphrates blue ;  
And of the peoples thou wast noble queen,  
Till in thy streets the Goth and Hun were seen.  
Discrowned by man, deserted by the sea,  
Thou sleepest, rocked in lonely misery !  
No longer now upon thy swelling tide,  
Pine-forest-like, thy myriad galleys ride !  
For where the brass-beaked ships were wont to  
float,  
The weary shepherd pipes his mournful note ;  
And the white sheep are free to come and go  
Where Adria's purple waters used to flow.

O fair ! O sad ! O Queen uncomforted !  
In ruined loveliness thou liest dead,  
Alone of all thy sisters ; for at last  
Italia's royal warrior hath passed  
Rome's lordliest entrance, and hath worn his  
crown  
In the high temples of the Eternal Town !  
The Palatine hath welcomed back her king,  
And with his name the seven mountains ring !

And Naples hath outlived her dream of pain,  
And mocks her tyrant ! Venice lives again,  
New risen from the waters ! and the cry  
Of Light and Truth, of Love and Liberty,  
Is heard in lordly Genoa, and where  
The marble spires of Milan wound the air,

Rings from the Alps to the Sicilian shore,  
And Dante's dream is now a dream no more.

But thou, Ravenna, better loved than all,  
Thy ruined palaces are but a pall  
That hides thy fallen greatness! and thy name  
Burns like a grey and flickering candle-flame  
Beneath the noonday splendour of the sun  
Of new Italia! for the night is done,  
The night of dark oppression, and the day  
Hath dawned in passionate splendour: far away  
The Austrian hounds are hunted from the land,  
Beyond those ice-crowned citadels which stand  
Girdling the plain of royal Lombardy,  
From the far West unto the Eastern sea.

I know, indeed, that sons of thine have died  
In Lissa's waters, by the mountain-side  
Of Aspromonte, on Novara's plain,—  
Nor have thy children died for thee in vain:  
And yet, methinks, thou hast not drunk this  
    wine  
From grapes new-crushed of Liberty divine,  
Thou hast not followed that immortal Star  
Which leads the people forth to deeds of war.  
Weary of life, thou liest in silent sleep,  
As one who marks the lengthening shadows  
    creep,  
Careless of all the hurrying hours that run,  
Mourning some day of glory, for the sun

Of Freedom hath not shewn to thee his face,  
And thou hast caught no flambeau in the race.

Yet wake not from thy slumbers,—rest thee  
well,  
Amidst thy fields of amber asphodel,  
Thy lily-sprinkled meadows,—rest thee there,  
To mock all human greatness: who would dare  
To vent the paltry sorrows of his life  
Before thy ruins, or to praise the strife  
Of kings' ambition, and the barren pride  
Of warring nations! wert not thou the Bride  
Of the wild Lord of Adria's stormy sea!  
The Queen of double Empires! and to thee  
Were not the nations given as thy prey!  
And now—thy gates lie open night and day,  
The grass grows green on every tower and hall,  
The ghastly fig hath cleft thy bastioned wall;  
And where thy mailed warriors stood at rest  
The midnight owl hath made her secret nest.  
O fallen! fallen! from thy high estate,  
O city trammelled in the toils of Fate,  
Doth nought remain of all thy glorious days,  
But a dull shield, a crown of withered bays!

Yet who beneath this night of wars and fears,  
From tranquil tower can watch the coming  
years;  
Who can foretell what joys the day shall bring,  
Or why before the dawn the linnets sing?

Thou, even thou, mayst wake, as wakes the rose  
To crimson splendour from its grave of snows ;  
As the rich corn-fields rise to red and gold  
From these brown lands, now stiff with Winter's  
    cold ;  
As from the storm-rack comes a perfect star !

O much-loved city ! I have wandered far  
From the wave-circled islands of my home ;  
Have seen the gloomy mystery of the Dome  
Rise slowly from the drear Campagna's way,  
Clothed in the royal purple of the day :  
I from the city of the violet crown  
Have watched the sun by Corinth's hill go down,  
And marked the 'myriad laughter' of the sea  
From starlit hills of flower-starred Arcady ;  
Yet back to thee returns my perfect love,  
As to its forest-nest the evening dove.

O poet's city ! one who scarce has seen  
Some twenty summers cast their doublets green  
For Autumn's livery, would seek in vain  
To wake his lyre to sing a louder strain,  
Or tell thy days of glory ;—poor indeed  
Is the low murmur of the shepherd's reed,  
Where the loud clarion's blast should shake  
    the sky,  
And flame across the heavens ! and to try  
Such lofty themes were folly : yet I know  
That never felt my heart a nobler glow

Than when I woke the silence of thy street  
With clamorous trampling of my horse's feet,  
And saw the city which now I try to sing,  
After long days of weary travelling.

## VII

Adieu, Ravenna! but a year ago,  
I stood and watched the crimson sunset glow  
From the lone chapel on thy marshy plain :  
The sky was as a shield that caught the stain  
Of blood and battle from the dying sun,  
And in the west the circling clouds had spun  
A royal robe, which some great God might  
wear,  
While into ocean-seas of purple air  
Sank the gold galley of the Lord of Light.

Yet here the gentle stillness of the night  
Brings back the swelling tide of memory,  
And wakes again my passionate love for thee :  
Now is the Spring of Love, yet soon will come  
On meadow and tree the Summer's lordly  
bloom ;  
And soon the grass with brighter flowers will  
blow,  
And send up lilies for some boy to mow.  
Then before long the Summer's conqueror,  
Rich Autumn-time, the season's usurer,  
Will lend his hoarded gold to all the trees,

And see it scattered by the spendthrift breeze ;  
And after that the Winter cold and drear.  
So runs the perfect cycle of the year.  
And so from youth to manhood do we go,  
And fall to weary days and locks of snow.  
Love only knows no winter ; never dies :  
Nor cares for frowning storms or leaden skies  
And mine for thee shall never pass away,  
Though my weak lips may falter in my lay.

Adieu ! Adieu ! yon silent evening star,  
The night's ambassador, doth gleam afar,  
And bid the shepherd bring his flocks to fold.  
Perchance before our inland seas of gold  
Are garnered by the reapers into sheaves,  
Perchance before I see the Autumn leaves,  
I may behold thy city ; and lay down  
Low at thy feet the poet's laurel crown.

Adieu ! Adieu ! yon silver lamp, the moon,  
Which turns our midnight into perfect noon,  
Doth surely light thy towers, guarding well  
Where Dante sleeps, where Byron loved to  
dwell.







